

Opus Oil

Thoughts on America and the Middle East...



K.W. Ibrahim

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Table of Contents

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Thoughts on America and the Middle East...

	<u>Page</u>
Introduction -----	i
Chapter One -----	1
Chapter Two -----	11
Chapter Three -----	21
Chapter Four -----	31
Chapter Five -----	40
Chapter Six -----	51
Chapter Seven -----	61
Chapter Eight -----	70
Chapter Nine -----	81
Chapter Ten -----	92
About the Author -----	102

Introduction

In this book, I write about America and the Middle East from my admittedly Arab American point of view – which is not “the” Arab American point of view, since like any group of people, we are not a monolithic group and there is no “official” point of view. I question many of the policies of American neocons and the Israeli government, as their world view is decidedly different than mine. To be critical of these groups inevitably leads to being branded anti-Semitic - a label I reject and see as a method of silencing and marginalizing my point of view, but that’s rather moot.

In grade school my best friend was Jewish, but we drifted apart after the six day war, even though we were probably too young to understand the geopolitics of that time. It’s likely I would loose the few Jewish friends I still have, if they were to read this book and not surprisingly we generally don’t talk politics. I believe the Jewish people have an absolute right to exist in peace... but the perpetuation of the Zionist state of Israel on Palestinian land, is for some of us, a thornier issue and one that will require superhuman effort or supernatural intervention to resolve peacefully... if that’s how it’s to be resolved.

This book is titled Opus Oi(l), because oil is the most coveted resource in the world and likely to remain so for the foreseeable future. The USA has made it clear that any attempt to “restrict” its oil supply, will be considered an act of war, which for me anyway, provides considerable food for thought.

Despite the conventional advice not to discuss religion or politics, these are two major topics in this book. After all, those subjects are constantly in the fore front or at least the recesses of our minds and have a huge influence on both Americans and Middle Easterners. In order to live in peace, I believe that humans have to coexist via dialogue, compromise and reconciliation... organized religions can help or hinder that process.

Three of the worlds “great religions” Christianity, Judaism and Islam have always had a very hard time meeting in the middle, so any possible “meeting places” for them, is likely to be fluid. In some cases the meeting place maybe closer to one religions position, while in other cases, it might be closer to the others. There seem to be many Americans who believe that fulfillment of a Biblically prophesized apocalypse is necessary before a glorious new age for mankind can come about. I hope the dire prophesies of the Bible are not written in stone, and are instead warnings of what will come to pass “if” all of humanity doesn’t reform and beat their swords into plowshares... before it’s too late.

Chapter One

For starters, it might be useful if more writers, pundits, analysts and talking heads disclosed their biases, as they certainly exist in everyone. I'm not saying it should be mandatory – but, just as financial analysts typically disclose any “positions” they have in stocks they recommend, it would be nice if the “experts” who are influencing public opinion would disclose anything in their “background”, that might taint their objectivity.

You may say this is a violation of freedom of speech... that's why I'm saying it should be completely voluntary. Who knows eventually, people may find that they are “expected” to come clean about their agenda and biases if they want to be taken seriously. Currently, I think these “opinion makers” are taking advantage of our system of free speech, by concealing; religious affiliations, foreign allegiances and other biases. It seems to me cynical and dishonest to sway opinion in a predetermined direction, in the calculated manner in which it is often done, without revealing one's biases. By wrapping themselves in the American flag and the First Amendment, lobbyists and pundits have freedom of speech, but no accountability to the public who they are influencing. Are they doing what's best for America, or instead, what's best for a foreign country, ideology or religion, to which they seem to owe their principal allegiance?

In these times of strife, the proponents of ultra-nationalism have a rhetorical advantage over the proponents of peace, just as the forces of fundamentalist religion have an advantage over the forces of reason. Both groups can stir the emotional pot far easier than those who want peace and reason can calm that caldron.

Invading countries to control their resources is as popular as ever, just cloaked in different rhetoric and explained in new terms... but as usual, it's provides society with what the people want. These essentials are little different than they were in the past, wine, women and song for the men and for the women? Well, I won't go there right now...

If you want to achieve lasting peace with an adversaries, why not try to find just solutions and mutually beneficial terms? Otherwise isn't one side just subjugating the other? Hasn't history demonstrated that to subjugate typically leads to further problems down the road.

It's natural that nations find themselves competing for resources, markets, prestige, influence and ideas, but we seem to use the stick and the fist more than most other countries... maybe that should be re-evaluated. You say it's naive to look at foreign policy that way and perhaps it is, but it might be surprisingly productive to earning the moral high ground instead of insisting on winning every time and at any cost.

We bombed Iraq instead of Saudi Arabia, in response to 9/11, but none of the hijackers were Iraqis and both governments were authoritative and repressive. Iraq was brutal to most of its citizens and Saudi Arabia reportedly oppresses most of its women and many of its men.

Trading one master for another is generally not the best solution and if that's what's happening in Iraq, we'd be better off letting them choose their new "masters" and not prop up tyrants, or puppets of our own choosing. We might help the Iraqis and others, or mess things up even worse than before... which is what appears to be happening. Meanwhile, if the freedom that we are offering, is primarily the freedom to incur debt and buy next year's junk, then I question the wisdom of embracing this current vision

Societies that feel compelled to change the world tend to do so violently... maybe that's why many of our institutions are violent... or at least aggressive. We came from tough people who often forcibly took control of other people's land... why should we be surprised that things haven't changed? Many Americans love the tough guy image and knowingly or not, help perpetuate it via personal behavior, acceptance of violence in our culture and by supporting aggressive foreign policies.

Hamas won the Palestinian election over Fatah... I wonder if that surprised the PTB? One thing I wouldn't be surprised about would be that they're hoping for, if not fomenting fighting between the two groups. The US cut some, or most of its aid to the Palestinians in response to the Hamas victory... what a surprise! In order to be "allowed" to be recognized, the US and Israel demand they lay down their weapons and accept Israel "right" to keep its spoils of war... ie. the Palestinian's land. The "powers that be" will allow the Palestinians to lick the boots of their oppressors and throw them a few scraps -- if they don't accept that, they will be starved and bombed...

I guess democratic results are only valid, if the "vanquished" vote according to the west's desires. Will we ever find out what most of the world already knows -- the Bushies could care less about freedom and democracy. The neocons have no intention to deal fairly with anyone... "might makes right" and it's no different than when we made treaties with native American tribes. The three main parties; Palestinians, Israelis and Americans can talk to each other directly or otherwise, or continue to kill each other... it will be the innocent that die... so what else is new!

Is Hamas a terrorist organization or are they freedom fighters? The lines are drawn and few will change their opinions regarding the answer to that question... even if I thought they were freedom fighters, I would be reluctant to "admit" it. Look at the original partition plan for Palestine from the late 1940s... who drew it up and in whose interest was it? I'm guessing that the Palestinians were not "instrumental" in the partition and were not pleased with having most of their land given away. So... will Bush and company give more money and weapons to the Israelis and more grief to the Palestinians? It isn't a stretch to surmise that the US goal is to divide and conquer the Muslim world in order to further the agenda of its own elite.

I find it almost irrelevant whether you throw a bomb, or drop it from the sky... the delivery system is less important than the tragic result... maiming, burning and killing people – many of them entirely innocent.

You call me anti-American, but all I'm doing is disagreeing with *parts* of our foreign policy, parts that are diametrically opposed to what George Washington recommended in his farewell address... I don't think that make me a traitor. If being a critic of a particular president is a crime, then others must have been criminals too, when they were so critical of his predecessor.

Being an American is like being part of a "movement" or a team... we are taught that we are "charged" with democratizing the world. If you don't accept this responsibility, some will say you're not a "real American." Democratizing the world *may* be a fairly noble cause, but the results have been a mixed bag... sometimes we succeed splendidly and occasionally we fail miserably. We are a "crusader" nation in every sense of the word... we are like Rome in the ancient world and England two centuries ago. We are full of bravado and convinced that the rest of the world will be better off if they would only see the light and conform to our system.

In the meantime, the profit motive is always present and the long arm of American law, justice and military are omnipresent as well. Rome was once the center of the western world... arguably the center of the world... look at what's left of Rome now... will the same the fate of America? Yes, America attracts people from all over the world who come for "opportunity", (read money), but what does the future hold? I hope it's not Balkanization, but any thing could happen... All I know, is that right now America is populated by a very, very proud people and you know what they say -- comes after pride...

The rest of the world knows a fair amount about us, but what does the average American know about the rest of the world? Not very much and that's not a very good omen Everywhere I go in America, people are (for the most part) still friendly, but it seems that we're becoming jaded and more suspicious of each other, especially those who are different from us.

I don't care that FOX news calls suicide bombers "homicide bombers", but I think we should call the sky pilots and tank crews homicide bombers as well... I'm sure that will go over well. They're all killing many innocents and arguably "that" is homicide even if it's by *accidental* "collateral damage" or at the request of the commander in chief. Statistically, there are far more innocents killed as a result of collateral damage than by suicide bombers, so I consider your cynical argument on behalf of mechanized murder a red herring.

A guy comes out of the desert, sees a land of milk and honey and tells his followers... go forth and conquer. This is the same guy who allegedly unleashed plagues on the Egyptians, turned his staff into a snake, received ten commandments on top of a mountain as well "instructions" from God, who was behind a burning bush. Why would you expect the people that Moses targeted for annihilation to

accept his decrees?

You keep saying that we can't leave Iraq because the different ethnic and religious groups will slaughter each other. By 2006 they were already doing that, so the question becomes how much worse would it be if we left... or, might the situation actually improve over time? No one can say for sure, but I wonder, is there any way to use your smart bombs and special forces to keep order and to smash the "forces of evil" like you did in Serbia? There probably isn't any way for that to work, the only way you can "pacify" the Iraqis would be to kill them all and I'm glad you don't want to do that.. (most Americans anyway.) In any case, I think the "powers that be" want to have a couple hundred thousand American boots on top of all that oil.

A former justice department official from the Reagan administration was being interviewed and said that you don't have to be carrying a gun to be held accountable for the actions of an enemy army. He stated that even a cook or driver can be considered a combatant ("legal" or otherwise)... he was referring to the situation concerning certain inmates at Guantanamo Bay. He says that "according to the rules of war"... *this and that* is legal while *that and this* isn't. As far as some people are concerned, there's very little about war that's "legal." War, is all about murder and mayhem... very little good can be said for it... despite it's obvious appeal to some. Most of the time when countries see some benefit to starting a war, they are able to "legitimize" it... and usually they start wars that will bring them profit in one form or another. I believe there might be legitimate wars... but they are the exception, not the rule that mankind has made them.

Thinking back to the Fourth of July service at our church, which I liken to a war rally, it's sad that parishioners seem to be spending little time praying for peace -- they want victory and nothing but victory. I know that victory might lead to peace, but I still think there should be more time spent praying for peace... and the heck with this blood lust for total victory, unconditional surrender and utterly vanquishing other peoples. Ironically, perhaps, across the ocean in the Middle East, just as many Muslims are praying for God's help to vanquish the Americans. So whose side if any is God on? I don't know, but a lot of people to think they do. What's wrong with peace, reconciliation, negotiation, compromise and justice?

I consider many American clerics every bit as despicable as the hate mongering Muslim clerics, that the media is so fond of showing on TV. The language used in our churches may be sanguine, but the religious establishment's determination to the unrepentant "heathens" is as strong as certain mullah's calls for jihad. Yes, we have greater freedom of speech than many other nations, but that doesn't mean you won't get in trouble for opening your mouth in the good old USA. The ultimate sanction is present here just as anywhere else, but Americans prefer; marginalizing, belittling, disgracing or ruining the reputation of anyone who gets too far out of line. It is a highly effective method of maintaining the status quo and keeping society moving in the "right direction."

You say that our government doesn't silence it's citizens through violence and I

agree in principal, but believe that it has on occasion liquidated it's own critics and will do so again. Of course it's much cleaner and more cerebral to let the crazies or the IRS take care of dissenters. On the other hand, when foreign countries get out of line, America, like imperial Rome or England is ready, willing and anxious to flex its muscles and try out its latest war toy on the "enemy." Having said that, I don't *quite* agree with those who constantly crow that we are the greatest nation that has ever existed. In some respects I think we are, but for those keeping score, I don't think the verdict of history is in yet.

Israel will hold the holy land as long as it's strong enough to, which according to my friends, will be forever.

You keep telling me that those young people in Iraq are fighting for my rights, but at best, I only partly agree. You say that I could not make it without our (aggressive) foreign policy, but there are people all over the world doing just fine and they may disagree that their success is due to your bomber jets and missiles protecting them.

Iran seems to be trying to slowing down the west's threats of sanctions or intervention, by employing various delaying tactics related to nuclear power and weapons. Meanwhile, the Israelis and America rattle their sabers in an effort to intimidate Iran into slowing down that program so they can perfect Israel's missile defense systems and make their first strike decisive. I'm just wondering who will blink first and whether or not reason has a chance of prevailing.

I believe that Bin Laden, the late Abu Musab Zarqawi *and* Bush are all criminals... you can debate who among them has more innocent blood on his hands but due to preconceptions, double speak and ideology, different sides will never agree. Even if Bush is a "better" man than Bin Laden or Zarqawi was, he has directly or otherwise, "authorized" the killing of tens of thousands of people. To be so influenced by oil money and religion that you are willing to bomb the hell out of people is nothing to be proud of. There are other ways to change the world... other much better ways. One thing I believe is that warfare creates war criminals. If we reduce our propensity for war, we'll certainly reduce the number of war criminals.

Now the Pentagon has released a study saying the U.S. military faces a severe crisis vis-à-vis recruitment in the future. Rumsfeld replies that everything is fine... but why should we believe a man whose actions indicate that he has no problem with sending bomber jets and other peoples children into the maelstrom that he been instrumental in helping to create.

Although we have freedom of speech, there are repercussions when we exercise that right too enthusiastically. Between the IRS, other government agencies and the lunatic fringe, dissenters are usually persuaded to bite their tongues, or loose them.

The UN lead by Britain and the west "authorized" the partition of Palestine which led directly to the state of Israel. Those acts were about as legitimate as the U.S. congress deciding to admit additional slave states in the 1800s or dispossess natives

from their ancestral lands. An international body voting to give away the land of others, is not much different than a national body voting to take away an individuals freedom... both are wrong, contrary to freedom and illegitimate. Not surprisingly in all these cases, "might makes right... no matter what the fight", no matter who or what is right.

I don't want to see the Israeli people harmed, but they have to work things out with their neighbors, destroy them, or constantly be at war. So far they have taking a militant and belligerent stand vis-à-vis their equally antagonistic neighbors. It looks like we're set up for Armageddon... but I hope not.

I am not anti-American by any stretch of the imagination... at least not by any stretch of my imagination. As far as some people are concerned however, if I am against the administration's foreign or domestic policies, then I am an America basher... that's baloney, but a fact of life.

War crime trials? Where were the courts of justice after Wounded Knee and the numerous other massacres of native Americans. Many of these, were officially sanctioned -- or at least unhindered by the US government? Strange thing is, most of those massacres have been lost to history forever... he who prevails, writes world history.

I don't agree with terrorism, I think the Muslims should protest peacefully, boycott, lobby or agitate. I also think that we are blaming everything on the Muslims and taking little or no responsibility for our actions and mistakes. Of course it doesn't matter to the "powers that be" what I, other Arab Americans, or anyone else thinks... after all, they believe they are our masters.

I believe in what ever system best preserves the individuals rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness... I think democracy does at best a half ass job of that. The "trick" is protecting *every ones* legitimate, equal rights and that rarely happen. Instead we give those with the most weight to throw around "privileges" and entitlements. That leaves the weak disempowered ... so like the songs says, "what's so wrong with peace, love and understanding" and what's wrong with equal rights for everyone?

A former actor turned investment guru was ranting on Fox News about how he doesn't care about the Middle East, he recommended letting them fight it out and says it's good that they're divided and that we should promote disunity amongst them. I guess he's just being honest and voicing the opinion of many Americans. Let freedom ring, seems to really mean let profits rise... never mind what the Bald Eagle is supposed to stand for. I agree there's nothing wrong with making a buck, but when we do it by blowing up other peoples homes, businesses and bodies, there's something wrong.

Even if a people deserve a lot of credit for some of the things they have done, that doesn't mean they should be given someone else's slice of paradise... if someone else is living in a land of milk and honey and you take it by force, you are wrong. Even if

you were horribly mistreated, or the “powers that be” world decide that you should have that land, it is still wrong to take it by force, farce, or fiction.

We are trying to spread our economic system all around the world, we are foisting a credit and debt driven economy on the rest of the world. This might not be so bad, since that may be the only way most people can afford to buy homes and have their little piece of paradise, but it’s also a far from perfect system. It is however a pretty easy sell!

In a way, the USA is quite like a religious theocracy... at least it is with our present president. The main difference is that we allow women to wear revealing clothes and people are free to get drunk. Other than that, our foreign policy is and always has been as driven by religious ideology as anyone else’s...

What the press was calling the domestic spy program has been renamed the “terrorist surveillance program” by the administration and they are “talking up” that new misnomer every chance they get... they know that if you tell a lie enough times it becomes known as the truth. With a sly Fox named Rupert and his friends running the media, there are plenty of chances for administration mouth pieces to broadcast their talking points. Even so, it looks like the tide has turned against the current administration, but they still hold sway over non-sectarian forces of reason and possibly always will.

The only possible way that American police actions around the world could be positive, is if in doing so, the affected countries can eliminate the negative aspects of their societies and maintain the positive aspects. The catch is, who decides what’s negative or positive? I suggest that it’s best for the people of such countries to decide what’s best with the support of a world community that adheres to universal principles of human rights and dignity. If on the other hand, we’re policing foreign countries for our own benefit or to help select factions in those countries gain the upper hand over their own people, then our actions are unjustifiable and unconscionable.

FORT CARSON, Colo. (Jan. 24, 2006) - A military jury recommended a simple reprimand Monday for an Army officer who killed an Iraqi general by stuffing him headfirst into a sleeping bag and sitting on his chest during an interrogation. As soldiers applauded in the courtroom, Chief Warrant Officer Lewis Welshofer Jr. hugged his wife. I don’t know what message this sends to you, but I know what it tells me and I think I have a pretty good idea what message it sends to people in the Middle East... but I forgot, we’ve been told that if they’re not with us, they’re against us...

I think they will hold the land as long as they’re strong enough to and that’s pretty much human history in a nutshell. I realize that you are not asking for my help... although my taxes help pay for your bombs... I mean efforts. What I object to, is that the; media, church and schools, are working so hard to convince our children that there is no higher calling than to kill, or be killed (the kill ratio as usual favors the crusaders by about 50 to 1) to insure Israeli occupation and control of the holy

land...

You're might be correct when you say the Israelis legitimately purchased land in Palestine at the beginning. However, you are less convincing when you claim they bought most of the land that makes up Israel. Starting with the Balfour Declaration, the UN partition and finally the wars, they have occupied most of the land by farce and by force.

While democracies are imperfect, absolute monarchies and dictatorships are by their very nature wrong... so let's stick with democracies, but lets make them better than they are now.

When you say that I hate America I deny it and despise you for that cheap (but effective) attack... certainly it marginalizes my position against the current administration and blinds the people to a loyal but differing point of view. I will however gladly admit that I am disturbed by the McDonald-Disneyfication of this great country. I am also not in denial that many immigrants who come here to share in the American dream of prosperity, are willing to do so at the expense of others. That mind set is no different that that of the earliest pioneers and every succeeding wave of immigrants. We may be generous, but we are also greedy... that's pretty much human nature, especially American human nature.

Regarding Iran, the senator stated that we have military options, he said they're the last options we should use, but we shouldn't rule them out completely. Once again it boils down to the willingness to do absolutely anything to get our way. I'd like to know, where was the west when Israel was developing its nuclear option? Probably selling them plutonium and blueprints for triggering devices!

It's entirely within the realm of possibility that the US, Israel and Britain will reduce Iran to rubble. Russia, China and anyone else who could possibly intervene or mediate will likely look on, grumble and promptly queue up for their share of the spoils.

The west has decided to shave off the Muslims' beards, because they would not trim their mustaches. Most of the Muslims are complaining very little, others are reacting very badly, but they don't have the firepower to shoot it out with the wild west cowboys and crusaders. Will either side ever reconsider their tough, or should I say intransigent stances? The US won't negotiate with terrorists, but they also won't negotiate with (dare I say it) insurgents, freedom fighters or anyone else that doesn't bow before them. The other side seems just as stubborn, both want their way and are willing to kill as many people as necessary to get it... I suppose that one side may get what it wants eventually, but a lot of innocents will be in the ground by then.

I feel like I'm surrounded by angry brainwashed people amongst whom I am trying to maintain a semblance of sanity. They go to their jobs, church, school and social events, where they are constantly pounded with messages of glory, superiority and manifest destiny. They are angry much of the time and super charged with

adrenalin, prescriptions and/or booze. They've been taught it's up to them to save the world, souls and to right wrongs...they're taught they'll go to hell if they don't do God's mighty work according to their leaders inspiration. They have been convinced that to go against the necons and the church, would be tantamount to letting their ancestors down... but I wonder if the founding fathers would approve of our current foreign policies? If George Washington's farewell address is any indication, they might not be too happy right now.

Even though they claim to believe in salvation by grace, many American churches seem committed to "mighty" works, which tend to leave destruction in it's wake, but they also keep the wheels of the economy turning. This isn't even to mention that we have to keep up with the neighbors, we have to consume, decorate, straighten up, eat, party and if we don't do all this, we're taught that things will fall apart! This is nothing more than a pyramid scheme - a giant treadmill that we are running ourselves to death on... it just keeps going faster and faster, unfortunately the train wreck is happening just slow enough that we can't quite see the approaching cliff.

If sanctions are imposed against Iran and oil prices skyrocket, it will be playing right into the neocons hands. Few things would unite the American people more effectively than the anger that will be generated when we have to pay *even* more at the pump. If the Iranians use oil or terrorism as their weapons of choice the neocons will be salivating... mighten that give them the full support of the America people to bomb the Persians to kingdom come?

The Philistines and Canaanites may have been guilty of sacrificing their babies... that is what you say, but were you not also guilty of infanticide? Did you not kill the women and children of the tribes you annihilated? I suppose it was for their own good, or you were just doing God's work... funny thing is, you benefited quite well in a material sense from the ancient ethnic cleansing of the land of milk and honey. Perhaps it was Gods work... I don't know, but don't be too surprised if I take you accounts with a grain of salt.

Bush said he looked into Putin's soul and realized he would trust or work with the man. I interpret that, as him realizing that they were birds of a feather.

Our military and politicians seem to see themselves are heroic liberators and can't understand why they are not more often showered with rose petals. After all, don't they sometimes do wonderful things for the people of Iraq... on the other hand they are sometimes doing terrible things to the Iraqis. If like in the movies they claim they only kill people that need killing, then they are very much wrapped up in a lie. We should be beating our swords into plow shears... if we make swords then we will use them and sometimes we will use them unjustly. Apparently being a farmer is not as exciting as being a "warrior" and mowing down beans is not as thrilling as mowing down heathens. I agree that we need to be capable of defending ourselves, but we should not be spoiling for fights so frequently... isn't it better to make food than war...

Ariel Sharon was hovering on the brink, after his second stroke and they were

talking about his legacy. They said he was not opposed to a Palestinian state with contiguity... that was only the second time I remember hearing this word. I hope we hear it more, as the Palestinians need a state that is contiguous and not a patchwork of disconnected towns and villages... as far as Sharon... I am not impressed with his record.

The former diplomat said it well... the war in Iraq had harmed us and made people around the world wonder what the true goals of American power are. I hope the Iraqi people finally achieve peace and prosperity and that America thinks long and hard before embarking on similar adventures in the future... but with Bush and company at the helm I'm not optimistic. There are better ways to obtain oil or influence foreign countries to reform, than by bombing them. I interpret our objectives to be - remake the Middle East to the neocons liking, squelch Muslim unity, sow confusion and cement Israeli and American control of the region.

I have no qualms with calling the Taliban and Al Queda barbarians... I just wonder if we haven't contributed to their establishment and rise.

Suicide bombings are wrong, but how else can the Palestinians resist the Israelis and the US? Historically when our soldiers have gone on those extremely rare "suicide missions" we call them heroes and the implication is that they will be going to heaven. When the Palestinians commit suicide bombings they are called terrorists and cowards. You say they should meet the Israelis or Americans on a "proper" field of battle if they have a beef with the occupation... but that would simply be another type of suicide for the Palestinians - who have no bomber jets or tanks and very little body armor compared to the Americans and Israelis. You call them cowards for attacking unarmed Israelis, but these are people who have confiscated their land. Our soldiers are applauded for their bravery, which is true, but they are also wrapped in layers of armor and housed behind thick concrete walls... we are all engaged in propaganda wars as much as in conventional ones. Why should I as an Arab American blame my cousins for trying to take their countries back from invading crusaders and Zionist colonizers?

The simple fact remains that if their lands were not invaded, they would have no occupiers to target for suicide bombings. Until the native peoples of the Middle East are utterly subjugated or annihilated by the westerners, they are likely to maintain their struggle... their jihad.

If a bunch of people stagger out of the desert after years of wandering, lay eyes on someone else's "land of milk and honey" and decide that God has promised it to them... why should the historic inhabitants believe such a claim?

I don't take the Bible as the literal word of God any more than I take any other holy book as God's literal word... That gives me the freedom and responsibility to study everything and think for myself... I know that many people don't like that. Historically the powerful have wanted to be in charge of what the rest of us think... from Popes to evangelists to mullahs, there are always "expert intermediaries" trying to tell us what God thinks... I think that is bunk.

Chapter Two

I don't know if Jesus rose from the dead, if Mary was a virgin and if God really "chose" the Jewish people... all I know is that a lot of blood has been spilled based on "expert" opinions. Do I believe that Jesus multiplied the fish and loaves... actually I doubt it, but I doubt that he lied about it, although others might have. Do I think he healed the sick...yes I do.

Senator Boehner says that Tom Delay (nicknamed the Hammer) is one of the greatest leaders the republicans have every had. Ariel Sharon lies in a coma and is lauded as a great leader of Israel... his nickname is the Bulldozer. Delay is accused on money laundering and various ethics violations, Sharon is accused of being complicit in civilian massacres... these are your heroes?

When I tell you I'm not a republican or a democrat, you tell me that I don't stand for anything. If you're not a member of a major party they accuse you of not standing for anything. As an independent I can stand for anything I want... and I can also think for myself... can you?

The republicans are generally the party of the upper classes and the democrats of the lower classes, but there are many exceptions to the rule as both are largely run by wealthy elitists. In both cases these masters think they know what's best for the rest of us.

I'm saying I don't embrace fundamentalist Christianity, but I'm not opposed to it either... most of you won't accept that and say I have to be for it or against it. Once more you slander me with charges of fence sitting and I say the world is not as black and white as you make it out to be.

I don't want to see the Iranians or anyone else get nukes, but I can't say I blame countries for wanting them. How else can they avoid being out muscled by those who do have them? There are bound to be Islamic terrorists in the west, but there are also hundreds of thousands of western soldiers in Islamic lands. What is the objective of each group? Are the Jihadis intent primarily on ousting western troops from their lands and are the western troops intent primarily on spreading democracy? The fundamentalists on both sides will likely answer this question one way, I would answer it another... some of us see shades of grey where they don't.

We are seriously violating the commandment "thou shall not kill." You try to rationalize it and imply that you are doing God's work. I don't know, but I doubt God orders the killing of civilians, even through collateral damage.

One of the senators launched into a monologue and used an analogy. Predictably, it was about football... "it's the fourth quarter of a football game and blah, blah, blah..." We seem to be all about winning games, winning wars and winning in the

market place... not that there's anything wrong with winning, except that sometimes we kill lots of people to guarantee our "success."

For such a loving Christian nation, we have certainly worked hard to perfect the science of war and mechanized killing... whether in a slaughter house or the streets of the middle east, the west deserves a Nobel Prize in this cruel science.

Your religion says support and save Israel no matter what it takes... well it seems to take other peoples children dying to do it. Some of us don't share your religious views and don't want the flower of our youth spent on *your* religious ideology... even if it is the dominant theology of the west.

Should one group of people, because of "superior intelligence", force or farce, has the right to lord over any other group or individuals?

Is terrorism an act of war or a criminal act? I would not leave it to the international lawyers to sort out, because they tend to do what their countries current administrations want them to. I think terrorism is wrong, despicable and misguided, but I'd say the same of bombing from the air, when there's *any* chance of inflicting "collateral damage" on civilians.

On the news - in the UK the new anti-terrorism laws include the "prevention of subversion" by prohibiting peoples right to speak of certain things. This goes way too far in the direction of government control over free speech... but actually inciting acts of terrorism is a different story.

Ariel Sharon is received pats on the back and probably a lot more, for removing about 8,500 settlers from the Gaza Strip, meanwhile, he's reportedly added over 12,000 new settlers to the occupied West Bank. Do the math... once again the Israelis are changing the facts on the ground in a calculated and cynical way.

The west wants to control Iran's supply of nuclear fuel and says they can have nuclear power plants only if they get the raw nuclear fuel from the west and return the waste and excess. I don't like seeing anyone with nuclear weapons, Iran and North Korea in particular, but I can see why they don't want to be dependent on the west. In addition to it disabling them from ever developing a nuclear deterrent to the west and Israel's nuclear weapon stockpiles, it also makes them susceptible to embargo and blackmail by the west at any time.

On a related note, we are angry at Pakistan or whoever for nuclear proliferation, yet didn't Israel get it's weapons grade uranium or plutonium through similar, nefarious back channels?

Mandatory wearing of veils and burkas? I'm for individual rights and that means women should have the right not to wear them. The countries where women are forced to wear them, are considers barbaric. As we've seen, if you are considered barbaric, outsiders will try and force you to change. That's proving to be ruinous for everyone, except the war profiteers.

Salmon Rushdie being interviewed about his new book Shalimar the Clown said something about America perceiving itself as championing freedom around the world, but, he continued, other countries often perceive our actions as having a lot more to do with power than freedom.

Rushdie seems pretty moderate and wants American and UK Muslims to stand up and be counted for modernism and moderation. I would like to ask him what about the injustices Muslims have endured at the hands of these “western moderates”, should they just sit on their hands?

For the most part, I’ve spent my life just watching the show and wondering who “wins?” Blacks, whites, Asians, Jews, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims, atheists, agnostics, no one... or everyone? Isn’t there some other way to plead our cases without resorting to violence?

What the Nazi’s did to the Jews in WWII was horribly wrong and unprecedented in the annals of human cruelty. Can anything be learned from that sickening chapter of history, to avoid future holocausts? One thing I notice is that the Jews were apparently perceived by some, perhaps many of the German people, to be thriving during a time when the average German was suffering through a severe economic depression. I don’t know if that perception had any truth to it, but it demonstrates that when an ethnic or religious minority appears to be better off than the “natives”, that minority had better watch out.

NPR’s sponsors say they support efforts to provide “ a just, equitable and sustainable society.” As with lots of other societal issues, who’s version of “just, equitable and sustainable” do they support? I’m pretty sure it’s their leaderships or their sponsors not anyone else’s. By it’s very nature “just, equitable and sustainable” are in the eye of the beholder. This is one reason to support individual rights, not group think or elitist control over us.

One-hundred and thirty thousand people died almost instantly when Hiroshima was nuked... the children cried for their mothers, begged for water and then died. They were not much different than our children... how could we have done that?

We are called a “wild ass” of a race, in the Torah... Why do you expect this “wild ass” of a race to accept this diagnosis and the relinquishment of their native lands? It seems just a bit too convenient for the usurper, to label the stubborn brother and his side of the family wild asses, so much the better for convincing posterity that their side is right. And since both brothers are incredibly stubborn, generations of conflict were insured and have ensued.

We want strong and stable democratic neighbors? Yeah right! What powerful nations really seem to want is an ever expanding sphere of influence. So, it really doesn’t matter if the neighbors are stable or not, as long as they tow the line and

don't export their problems to us... we only want their resources.

Of course the world needs the Jewish people, they are arguably the most intelligent and creative "people" on earth, but that doesn't mean they should "manage" others. Other "peoples" are very close, or right up there with them intellectually and all of us want to be self governing. Brilliant people should promote their love of knowledge and learning, not their particular world views, especially if those views involve dominating others.

If you disagree with my point of view, maybe you can talk me out of it, lets discuss or debate the point... not argue and fight.

It's strange, but I think the names of American military operations are starting to sound like those of the Nazis. Rolling Thunder, Iron Fist, Desert Storm, Shock and Awe, Winter Storm... actually the last one was the Nazis operation to relieve it's troops during their disastrous siege of Stalingrad.

The more I see and hear of human history and of current events, the harder it becomes to disagree with the killer ape hypothesis. When we are misled by mega-maniacal leaders, via; ideology, nationalism, religion or whatever, we seem utterly willing... no, anxious to kill each other.

So when, if ever, will the human race to stop killing each other? Certainly we have the intelligence to know that preying on each other is wrong... but we are greedy enough to find stealing *acceptable*, as long as it's in the name of something pious. Rationalizations make it justifiable in our minds and our crafty hands forge the vile weapons we raise against each other.

If we ever stop stealing each others land and resources, maybe we'll get along, but until that stops, how can we expect the cycle of violence to end?

Do you think that everyone can and should change to fit into your mold, be they; Arab, Vietnamese or Native American. I think you do, because when they refuse, you invade, attempt to destroy them and take their riches. It doesn't matter to you that they may or may not want to fit into your mold, or be "better off" like you... you seem to know what's right for everyone.

It's telling how many of our schools, cities and monuments are named after men with blood on their hands. Of course most people would say that the killing our heroes were implicit in, was "justifiable and necessary."

The older guys neocons spread propaganda to keep us revved up for fighting and resource "reallocation." They like being an imperial power whose "superior" religions and ideology makes it all right. They have no trouble enlisting young crusaders who are excited about foreign adventures, sight seeing at the ancient wonders of the world and civilizing the "miscreants" they've conquered. Hasn't

this been going on since time immemorial?

You tell me that our wars and military have made us freer and more prosperous than any other people, but I ask ... how are we freer and more prosperous? Increasingly we can't afford health care, we have very little job security, social security is in jeopardy, we can be imprisoned for smoking a joint, we have shorter vacations, work longer hours than people in most developed countries and many of us are deeply in debt. Yes, we have color TVs, can watch ball games, party and go to the church of our choice but that's available in all civilized countries. Do we need even more wars and a greater military industrial complex? Oh that's right... you claim that we are guaranteeing freedom for the rest of the world, even though our jingoes and neocons complain about them constantly. Have we asked them if they want us to be the world police? Meanwhile our rich get richer and the working people are further squeezed...

Regarding the Middle East, it doesn't matter what I think... if I disagree with the herd, I'm attacked as a traitor or America hater. There is no respect for anyone who exercises their "right" to free speech, unless it jives with the party line. What *should* matter, is what the people in the lands you're so keen to "liberate" think. Our leaders don't seem to give a damn about that... not until they find Middle Easterners who agree with their point of view, then they crow from the roof tops.

You have the itchiest trigger fingers I've ever seen. Some of you fervently deny a woman's right to have an abortion, under any circumstances, but you enthusiastically support aerial bombing that routinely kills pregnant women, their unborn children and other civilians. As long as they are the "enemy" as it's been preached and defined, the hell with them your actions say... that's pretty damn sick.

"Trust in God, but tether your camel"... Mohammed (from the Hedif)

The Brits are having a day of remembrance for the fifty-six innocent people killed in the July 7th, 2005 London train bombings... and rightly so. They are lighting four candles, one for each of the bombing locations. In Iraq, there are usually more than fifty-six innocents killed each day... sometimes on purpose by murderous terrorists, sometimes by accident by "ordinary" insurgents, or by coalition soldiers... have we in the west ever lit candles for these innocent Iraqis? Do you pray for their lives to be spared?

Like Bush's right wing constituents, my family is willing to follow me, as long as I lead them where they want to go. He and I are orchestrated by external forces and if we don't lead where we're "supposed" to, we can be replaced... I don't think he has as much to worry about as me.

If America ever was the greatest nation on earth, then it probably still is, but it's greatness has been diminishing for decades. At the rate it's going, America may eventually be little more than an empty shell, little resembling the great country it

once was. Regarding it's checkered past, genocide of the natives, slavery and discrimination, these crimes mean that it earns a C, not an A or a B, but compared to other historical world powers, that's not such a bad grade.

While Saddam was undoubtedly a rogue ruler, Israel is arguably more of a rogue nation than Iraq ever was. I care about the holocaust of the Jews, but not enough to give them Palestine... although you fervently support that presentation. Why would the indigenous people of Palestine believe the claim, that God promised their land to the Hebrews? Three thousand years ago, the Hebrews descended on Palestine and used ethnic cleansing and genocide to conquer much of the "promised land." For their current conquest they have somewhat more humane methods of conquest, but once again their gains have been via force, uncompensated displacement and the claim that they are chosen over the native people by God.

Your people have been the leaders in many venues and if there is ever to be peace, they may have to lead the way there as well. Funny how many of the people who have done great things remain nameless and forgotten. Those that we remember, are often the ones who sent the forgotten people into battle or who creatively managed the rank and file for their own gain.

I think it's a shame that so many fine minds have been swallowed up by the military industrial complex, but you see it as guaranteeing our security. Instead of building a better mousetrap, solving the energy crisis or combating diseases, the flower of our youth learn to build more terrible weapons to kill their brothers and sisters and to maintain the "world order."

November 2nd 2005, on Fox morning news... Israeli soldier killed in "raid" on Palestinian camp. Fox and friends are proud of these "raiders", after all, they have to protect their ill gotten gains. Who was this man Moses who supposedly led the Israelites out of the desert and into the promised land of milk and honey? Perhaps God spoke to him from a burning bush, *perhaps* he was a fruit cake... in any case, why would the locals who he was planning to dispossess of their land believe his claims?

You are an incredible people, but so are the Arabs... it's tragic that you are at each others throats. Is it really impossible to get along? I suppose it might be without giving them back their country, or killing most of them as you seem quite willing to do and probably would have by now if it weren't for public opinion.

I hate to say it and will be lambasted for doing so, but I think soldiers should face accountability for their actions, especially when civilians are harmed and the soldiers are all volunteers.. ... even more so, I think their superiors should be held doubly accountable. Lambasted... does that mean basted like a lamb?

If I want to give money to an Arab charity, I could be arrested for giving money to terrorists, but Tom Delay's lobbyist friend Jack Abramoff allegedly passed

campaign contributions to an Israeli sniper school. It's okay to train Israeli's to kill Palestinians, but not to help Palestinians who's land has been stolen. A democratic country is only as good as its charter or mission statement... be it written or implied. If that charter, mission or common goal is to prey on others, then the fact that they're democratic is a red herring and they are first and foremost still fascist SOBs.

It doesn't matter very much what I think... what matters is what the warring parties think. It's "telling" that you spit on me for wanting to sit this one out and not get involved in your rampage. I prefer to sit on the fence and yell "stop it!", but you call me a coward and traitor for not joining in your crusade. You say that if I'm not for you, then I'm against you... I say, I'm not for or against you, I'm against the killing.

After hearing about the movie *Paradise Now*, by a Palestinian film maker and an Israeli producer, I don't think I can fully comprehend the mind of a suicide bomber any more than that of a Israeli who has settled on confiscated Arab land. I can get some idea of their motives, but I don't believe in the actions of either one. As with all the major questions of the Middle East conflict, it's the thoughts of the people on the ground there that matter most.

I agree that terrorism is wrong, decry it and with it were not being practiced... but that doesn't mean I am surprised that an oppressed and occupied people would resort to it, when they think they have no other means of fighting their oppressors.

Just as I think some of the fundamentalist Muslim Madrasses are not promoting violence and jihad, I believe that some of the fundamentalist Christian churches are not advocating crusade and conquest.

Maybe half of my brain is Christian and the other half Muslim... I don't really know what's going on in my head, but I seem to have a non-conforming brain... I believe in God, but not in religions.

You say that I have a bad side, vindictive or evil or whatever slur you want to use and you say it's my Arab side, the "Ishmael factor." I say baloney, *if* there's anything *wrong* with me, it's just as likely to be from my "American" side. I think both sides are a glass half full.

Like the American's, Canadians, Normans and everyone else, the Israelis will hold onto their spoils as long as they are strong enough to. If they keep them long enough, like the Normans for example, then it may eventually be a non-starter to even discuss the issue of the previous inhabitants. It's also a bit moot to discuss "original" inhabitants of any settled region on earth, as those "people" are likely to be long gone... historically it's been might that makes right.

Is the US just another in the long list of powers that has invaded Iraq over the

centuries to control the riches and strategic location, or is it somehow high, mighty and noble? Time will tell, but I for one am not impressed with our apparent motives.

I can't point a finger at one group for rioting, such as blacks in the US, Haiti or wherever, when Arabs in France and Iraq are every bit as violent. It seems that every ethnic group is prone to violence when it feels wronged by the society they live in. It's more the exception than the rule, to protest peacefully and it seems that violent protest is even more common in countries where people have more freedom. In Saddam Hussein's Iraq and in China, violent protests were rare, due to the brutality with which they were suppressed.

Would I confront bigotry on behalf of a black or Jewish friend or acquaintance? I probably should and possibly would, but realistically, it might depend on what is happening politically at the time... that's when the difference between a friend and an acquaintance seems to become more important. I'm not saying that's noble, I'm just looking at it realistically and thinking back to my opinion of Ben Franklin's fancy words... I understand that we *should* stand up for equal rights and free speech for everyone, but I think that strategy has backfired enough times and led to loss of rights for people like me too many times, to make it a hard fast rule.

You are right, unlike people under Saddam and other tyrants, I am lucky to have the right to express myself. I disagree that people all over the world owe the USA a huge debt of gratitude for that right... maybe some do, but many others probably don't. Have all the wars we've engaged in, all the people we've killed and all the damage we've done, been to ensure freedom for the people of the world, or has much of it been for our selfish commercial interests... or are these things inexorably intertwined?

I won't deny that many of the fundamentalists have the "best interest" in mind for the people they are "liberating", it's just that they are too willing to do it with violence. A significant portion of the time, after the violence they unleash on tyrants and innocents alike, there is no positive result and simply another tyrant comes to power.

VFW - Veterans of *Foreign Wars*... most of our wars are...

Am I deluding myself and others when I protest the war in Iraq? I hope not, but realize it's quite possible that I am entirely wrong... after all the idea of deposing a tyrant and establishing democracy makes a lot of sense. Still there are many of us that have reservations about the whole effort... some question it's; legality, cost in lives, motives etc. On the other hand, if the eventual outcome results in major improvements for a large majority of Iraqis, then the effort may be worth it...certainly the victors will portray it any way they want and most of the sheeple will bleat according.

We are constantly dehumanizing and thinking of new insults for the other side; Saracens, Moors, infidels, crusaders, jihadis, terrorists, insurgents, collaborators, etc.... the war mongers know that such slurs keep the pot boiling.

Judith Miller has announced (11/8/05) that she will accept a severance package from the NY Times and leave... she is tire of “being the news.” I wonder if she’ll also accept the million dollar prize that an Israeli organization has offered her?

Who owns the American hotels bombed in Jordan? Was it the Radisson, Hyatt and Days Inn????

I don’t understand either side, at the most, I have just an inkling of what motivates their violence, but I do have an inkling...

Seems like the war on terror started in Afghanistan to root out Bin Laden, then it moved to Iraq to get rid of the WMDs and now it’s to democratize the Middle East. Reminds me of the Indian wars... we got the land, and they were given the “opportunity” to be “civilized” like us. The whole premise was and still is highly questionable.

The many ironies of America, democracy which we’ve championed, native American persecution and racism which we’ve been guilty of combine to make this a truly unique country.

President Bush used the words cowardly and barbaric to describe the terrorists who bombed the hotels in Jordan in November 2005. I agree they were at the very least barbaric, aren’t coalition soldiers also blowing people up? No matter how you do it, in any but the most unusual situation, blowing people up should be a crime. Almost every day, the coalition kills Iraqis and quite often the circumstances and “justification” are murky at best.

My definition of a religious extremist, would start with - someone who advocates violence in the name of religion, be it to save or to punish someone else.

As far as I know, the message of Jesus is about as peaceful and that of any other great religion, but in practice Christianity has been as bloody an affair as any other religion... WWJB?

Suicide bombing is sick, repulsive and disgusting, it’s just another horrific tactic used by practitioners of war, just like the aerial bombing or artillery barrages that mechanized armies use. In the final analysis, whoever wins will write the history books and praise their fighters. I still think that Gandhi like tactics are worth a try.

The American system is better than those that won’t allow their subjects to read the Bible or other foreign holy books. But, what is the percentage of Americans that have read foreign holy books and what is the percentage of people in other countries

that have done the same? I'm guessing that in both cases, it's very low. In many societies, the people are discouraged either by law, tradition or peer pressure to explore "foreign" religions.

I have never been as critical of American policy as I have been during the GWB administration... and I've been plenty critical of the last few administrations!

How much do we spend daily in Iraq... probably hundreds of millions of dollars. How much do we spend on medical research daily? I'm guessing it's a far less. We might achieve a better result for more people, if we spend our money on cures for the many diseases and afflictions of the human race, than spending it on bombing people. We can better influence repressive regimes with positive examples and access to peaceful technology, than by bombing people and selling weapons to those that cooperate with us.

It would be great if the Jihadiis and insurgents stopped fighting us, but it's unlikely they will, until we stop fighting them. If both sides are determined to "achieve" total victory, this could drag on for a long time. Who is right and who is wrong in Iraq? You insist that I say America is right and the insurgents are wrong, or else you'll call me a traitor. All I know is two wrongs don't make a right.

I'm staring at a commercial aircraft that is miles up in the sky... I can barely make it out and can also see its contrail. I think about people half a world away, looking up and seeing similar sights and the terror they must feel as moments later, the world blows up around them. Are they free at last... compliments of the air force. The men who drop those bombs and the people that send them are neither heroes or brave, they are cruel, vicious and barbaric. Like the terrorists, they are extremists who show no compassion for innocent life and apparently no remorse when they extinguish it.

Arab nationalism? In a tribal society is that simply a pipe dream?

A man gets up every morning wracked with pain and sometimes considers putting a bullet through his brain. He believes that would be wrong and wonders if he should take some of the "enemy" with him, he's not sure if that's wrong, but he should know that it is wrong. Another man has many children, one is not too bright, the man thinks that boy would make a good martyr, bring honor to the family, injure the enemy and end up in paradise. These are two ways "der bomber" can be born, another is through an academy that teaches the science of high tech bombing from jet planes... all of these killers are respected by certain elements within their societies... glorified in fact.

You call me a traitor and coward if I won't fight for your cause... but I still won't kill for what I don't believe in.

Chapter Three

“I know now there is no one thing that is true, it is all true”... Ernest Hemingway (Islands in the Stream)

I believe this is a great country, but I won't be baited or intimidated into crowing that it's the greatest in the world. There are other countries that are in that race and there may be other planets in this infinite universe with “societies” that could be in the running... we may be living on a third rate planet for all we know!

Truth and reconciliation commissions like that in South Africa, may be valuable able to do some good in the Middle East.

I don't want to see people driven into the sea, but it's wrong to invade and occupy other peoples land and homes...

Your book says those of us with Arab blood are like “wild asses”, but don't we all have a bit of that in our make up? When someone tries to crush you or take your land, don't you fight back as hard as you can? We can all learn from each other and we need to learn from each other, but if we don't stop stealing from each other, how can there be peace.

For decades, Muslims have been settling in Europe and Hispanics in the US... invasions, migrations and counter migrations. In America and Europe the western European derived peoples are “suffering” from low birth rates and the immigrants are increasing as a percentage of the population. It's ironic that we have been encouraged to reach zero population growth... while immigrants apparently have not, or are ignoring that ideology. If you ask me, it's crazy to embrace zero population growth on this planet, unless you are content to see your people eventually disappear.

If local people don't stop the excesses of their governments, outsiders are likely to intervene and stop the excesses by the harshest measures. We've seen that happen throughout history, especially in recent decades... we've also seen the outsiders sometimes becoming the only beneficiaries of their interventions.

Total war... clash of civilizations, Sherman's march to the sea, Dresden, Hiroshima, destruction of the enemies; society, infrastructure, food stores and civilian population centers. These are strategies that have been used in war for thousands of years... they are no more justifiable now than they were in the beginning.

The Israelis saying that Hamas' “terrorist” infrastructure has to be dismantled

before there can be peace, is a little like the Nazis saying the French and other resistance movements infrastructure has to be dismantled before there can be peace. In both cases, invaders who are occupying other peoples lands have no right to demand this, other than the “rights” they derive from the power of their armies.

It may not even matter if newsmen and women disclose their biases like stock brokers, after all the anti-Arab bias is so deeply ingrained in our culture through; religion, Hollywood, the news media and terrorist attacks, that it would take many years of “good behavior” by the Arabs, to undo the damage ... and how likely is that.

Justice seems closely tied to ones rank and wealth, no matter where you live. In the Middle East, you are probably at an advantage if you have money and are from an influential family. In the US, Europe, Israel or where ever, I believe it's much the same. The trappings and legal system may differ, but it's still the rich and powerful that are most likely to get away with their crimes.

In the Middle East, I wish the Arabs would at least try civil disobedience... what do I think about 9/11? I believe in the commandment, “though shalt not kill.” I believe in that across the board, I also believe in turning the other cheek and I also believe in the right to self defense. I don't think these positions are mutually exclusive either... figure it out.

After the Nov. 2005 Amman, Jordan hotel bombings, the Jordanian ambassador to the US was on the radio and taking a firm, pro-Western line. The sad thing is that Americans will consider him a heathen, no matter what and treat him and his fellow Arab Jordanians like dirt not matter how much he bows to the west. Of course King Abdullah is half English, so the policy of the ruling family is likely to be influenced by the king's mixed heritage.

Is this the liberation of the people of the Middle East, or is this a fourth crusade? Time will tell and it will depend somewhat, on how much force the west applies and how much the Middle Eastern people want to be democratized... and finally it will depend on what “democratization” means.

The medieval crusades lasted about 200 years after which the Europeans invaders were mostly expelled. The west started the fourth crusade in about 1800 with Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, so once again the west has been there 200 years... this time who will “win?”

The yellow “support our troops” ribbons that I see on cars, reminds me of the church. If you have the yellow ribbon on your car, does it mean you also support the war or the troops “mission?” I suspect the neocons would spin it that way. The church does a similar thing when they ask you if you're a Christian. If you say, I'm baptized and have asked Jesus to be my personal savior, they say good, but in the next breath or a bit later, they're likely to ask you if you think he rose from the

dead, and then ask you if you believe the Bible is the inerrant word of God and so on and so forth until some of them will demand that you support the fourth Crusade, the Dallas Cowboys or whatever other else is in their hearts at the moment.

What I call addressing root causes you call negotiating with terrorists... so who're we going to listen to?

In principle, I'd like to see a denuclearized world, including the US, but in the meantime I don't particularly care if the North Koreans or Iranians have them. I can see why they want them and I can see the horror that could be caused by them having nukes. I suspect the most horrible consequences would be for their own people, since the nuclear super powers could wipe them off the face of the earth and some would like very much to.

The west and the nuclear club in general would like to keep their monopoly on these WMDs, so that they can maintain the status quo. That's probably not the worst thing in the world, nor is it the best solution.

The US reluctantly admits (November 2005) that it used white phosphorous a gaseous incendiary weapon against combatants in Falujah... that's not very nice... shit, that stinks!

I'm not an expert on and I didn't stay at a Holiday Inn Express last night, I'm just trying to stimulate thought and discussion among regular folks, not necessarily among the experts, I imagine they have more important things to do.

The three monotheistic religions, talk about Jerusalem being their holy place, but the people who had it first also may have seen it as holy. Whoever holds it by force, is the one that can claim it for themselves and for their religion... apparently that's how it works.

In the case of Iraq, it's obvious to just about everyone except for the neocons and their allies, that it was for oil and religion.

America's policy of always insisting on total victory and unconditional surrender may come back to haunt us... I hope we learn to *sometimes* be conciliatory before it's too late.

November 2005, 170 Iraqi Sunnis have been found imprisoned and mistreated in the basement of the Interior Ministry. Maybe we should have tried to "civilize" them before we invaded them... now we may have one tyrannical regime replaced by another... again.

You are an incredible people, a fantastic people, but do you really expect the people whose land you covet, to believe stories about your mystics in the deserts, burning bushes and talking donkeys? They were not born yesterday! Your ten tribes may

have never been equaled, but come on, be reasonable!

I'm an independent, in my case, fiscally conservative and leaning towards liberal on social issues. I don't believe in extreme positions in either of those arenas, however, I believe I'm moderate on both and that means there is no party that represents me... not republican, democrat, libertarian or green. The fact that I am pro Palestinian makes me further estranged from all of the above.

Peace activists are like doctors, their eventual goal may be to go out of business, but it's an unlikely one.

Personally, I don't believe the state of Israel was founded justly, but I don't believe the people should be driven into the sea. That doesn't mean I think it has earned a place in the community of nations... but it will, as long as they have the power to defeat all comers.

I think that both Saddam's regime and our invasion were criminal... I don't think that two criminal actions equal justice. Although the mathematics of geo-politics may prove me wrong... like a negative times a negative...

Talking to an acquaintance recently, I was asked "how was it crossing the Canadian border?" I told him it was a hassle, we were searched thoroughly as usual... he said that wasn't right, "after all, you're not a rag head." Only about the hundredth time I've heard such a remark...just another brick in the wall.

In the first, second and third crusades, the Europeans had a distinct advantage in the area of armor... more heavily armored knights and larger more powerful horses. Now once again the American crusaders have a major the advantage in armor and heavy weapons.

If Americans were dying in the numbers they did in WWII or the civil war, I wonder if as many young people would be anxious to serve in Iraq? The chances of being killed is much smaller than in those wars... and you get to kill "heathens" and blow things up. This is largely a cynical war designed to win control of oil and leave the Arabs as unified as possible. As far as bringing democracy to them, I doubt if that's the major desire of most Americans. The ones I hear, are mostly after revenge for 9.11, and I rarely hear anything but hate spewed at the Arabs... they say "we need to kill more", they don't deserve freedom and they're ripping us off for oil.

Meanwhile I think our military is being misused by corporate and religious interests, but the boots on the ground don't seem to care... after all, they're enjoying camaraderie and being called heroes for killing Arabs and blowing up their cities.

These damn think tanks like the Center for Strategic and International Studies spew their hate and prejudice thanks to financing from powerful special interest groups, meanwhile, their carefully chosen names give them credibility with the people and politicians.

Will GWB go down in history as a great Crusader leader like Richard the Lion Hearted? His forces have seemingly prevented another 911 type attack and have killed many jihadis, he is a hero to millions.

Strange how the internet, invented by the west is being used by the jihadis to disseminate information on making improvised weapons to combat the crusaders.

I don't want to see Middle Easterners blowing things up in the west, but it still doesn't make me happy to see Americans blowing things up in the Middle East.

In Siriana, George Clooney's character types in an Arabic name into the computer to get info and the computer freezes, implying that someone is fooling with, or monitoring the net. I remember strange things happening, when I googled "Ariel Sharon" and "we control America" ... but I doubt that many people ever heard about him allegedly saying that.

I have relatives in Europe and the Middle East who have worked hard and are doing well. I've also traveled to several continents and have seen how people live. Some are doing well, others are in poverty... that's true to a considerable extent in the US too. I don't know how we stack up on the average, but obviously there's less poverty in the US than in many places... I think there's also more poverty in the US, than in many places. You tell me that that foreigners largely owe their prosperity and freedom to us and you *may* be right... or you may be wrong. Why don't you ask people from other countries with relatively high standards of living what they think... do you even consider such opinion's valid?

I'm glad the soldiers believe in what they're doing and want to complete their mission, but I'm not sure I believe what they're doing is right. I've seen too much Arab bashing and hatred, to not be suspicious of neocon claims of wanting to liberate these people. Today, I'm sharing a Thanksgiving meal with relatives. They regularly express their "feelings" about Arabs... "those damn Arabs", "we should have killed more of them"... "if they can't control their border, we should." This isn't any different than the things I hear from friends, acquaintances and strangers.

Just because your soldiers have the best kill ratio in history, doesn't mean they should be out killing people and destroying things overseas. Surely there are better ways to achieve positive outcomes... I think you enjoy this culture of violence, why else would it so permeate our society and foreign policy?

The neocons claim that many Arabs want to spread Islam worldwide by violence, I think it's more likely that most Arabs simply want an end to this latest crusade and

evict the invaders.

I am not anti-American, although it's a moot point, since I'll never convince you, unless I spout the party line... I simply believe that GW the 1st pres, was a whole lot wiser than GWB.

Even fundamentalists and jihadiis can be quite reasonable until issues of religion are brought up, that's when things seem to get dicey.

As an independent and an Arab American, can I speak frankly about sensitive issues like Palestine, race in America, marriage and the legal system, community property etc? I am told that like all Americans I can, but when I do, I am lambasted mercilessly and slurred with labels like Neanderthal and anti-this, anti-that. I may also be threatened with everything from legal action to violence. So it seems that to a considerable extent, freedom of speech is a paper tiger and red herring.

I won't speculate on the final outcome, positive or negative in Iraq. On the one hand, you shouldn't look a gift horse in the mouth, but it's the Iraqi people who will decide if this "gift" is what they want. I suppose it will depend on if the Iraqis in question are Sunnis, Shiites, Kurds or other groups. I might be critical of why we went in, but if the outcome is positive that would be nice. Can they have a just and equal society as a result of our intervention or as a result of their own efforts?

Meanwhile, I am critical of the need to occupy the country and to wreak such death and destruction. If we were determined to change the country, couldn't we have targeted Saddam and his inner circle? Maybe, maybe not... but I think one reason we don't do things like that, is because leaders often have a "gentlemen's" agreement not to target each other. It's much safer for them to kill thousands of common people than to attack the thugs at the top... professional courtesy I guess. There are exceptions of course... the Israelis for example regularly target Palestinian leaders, because they can do so with immunity.

I have not put an "I support the troops" ribbon on my car, but think I might... I would have to add the words, "not Bush" to it.

Maybe a two state solution for occupied Palestine is fair... I don't know. It's for the people there to decide... if we ever let them.

Maybe I'm like my people, disorganized at times, brilliant on occasion, perhaps a bit wild, like we're described in the Bible. This morning after my wife snaps at me for leaving the bedroom door open, I'm thinking of the line from Stephen Kings movie Dolores Claiborne, uttered by the character Vera Donovan ..."sometimes being a bitch is all a woman has to hold on to." At times we're all influenced by our hormones, genetics and God knows what else.

Electric Boat Corp. announced that they are about to loose over 1,000 jobs and

predictably they are rather upset. This is another example of how the military industrial complex is so encompassing, that people almost have to support it, because so many jobs are directly or indirectly affected by it. Big cars and cheap oil *also* have us by the short hairs pressuring us to support the policies of big oil and lacky politicians.

I think the western press is better than the Arab press, but not *all* that much better... not to mention that we are corrupting it by paying for favorable articles to be published in Iraq. We have also reportedly threatened to blow up Arab news outlets that publish unfavorable articles and we've arrested Arab Americans' for trying to transmit certain Arab stations on American satellite TV.

Is Iraq a quagmire and an abyss? We deposed a certifiably vicious ruler, but what is the prognosis? Now things may, or may not get better... even if we stay for many years. If we leave there's no reason to believe things will be better either, so have we accomplished much or any thing positive? I suppose that depends on what you think we should be accomplishing... the neocons may not have gotten their way completely, but they've eliminated a potential threat to the Israeli state and have landed 130,000 American boots on top of all that oil.

I make these observations and comments as a bit of an outsider. I have always been treated reasonably well by the people here, although acceptance and hospitality have seemed somewhat conditional. If I open my mouth, I'm looked at like a nut case and reminded that I can go elsewhere, if I don't like it here. Even if I wanted to leave, it wouldn't be as easy as it sounds. Between tax law, social security and other government controls it could be ruinous to leave... then there's my family...

"Most of the tragic record of history is based upon the absurd notion that dying for country is noble and killing the latest enemy is glorious..." SARTRE, born in Paris, June 21, 1905

Neocon William Krystal is being interviewed about his new book, The Right War? I seem to remember that he was gung ho for the Iraq war... is he having second thoughts now? If so, it's most likely a subterfuge and clever segue into recommending attacking another Muslim nation.

Neocons such as Krystal have been instrumental in this crusade. The last crusade was started by Napoleon and extended through the colonial period... the fifth can be said to have started in about 1948.

I was watching a TV show about the conquistadors... they were after "God, Glory and Gold." Now the western conquistadors are after "God, Glory and Oil." It's been said of invaders before... "they came to do good and they did very well."

Celebrations, holy days, Christmas, Easter etc. ... each religion thinks theirs are sanctioned by God and the other religion's holy days are not... divisive of course... as intended - I think.

Am I anti Israel? Are you pro Palestinian? Can I be pro Palestinian and not anti Jewish, I think I can. Can I be pro Palestinian and not anti Zionist? That I'm not so sure about.

Instead of hundreds of billions we're spending occupying, blowing up and then rebuilding Iraq, we could spend it on, finding cures for:

Cancer

Blindness

Diabetes

Heart disease

Macular degeneration

Paralysis

AIDs

Ending the sex slave trade from eastern Europe and elsewhere that conduits through Mexico to the U.S.A.

Or give \$ 1,000 for gasoline to every licensed driver who owns a car in America, after all, it's a war for oil anyway!

The Ministry of Propaganda...

**Retired generals in various cities
are interviewed nightly about the war.**

**The maps are shown and strategies
discussed with great enthusiasm.**

**Our troops are grabbing the bulls
by their horns. Resistance is soon**

**to be overcome. But resistance
to what is never quite defined.**

**The news anchors gaze upon
these guests with the admiration**

**until now shown only to movie stars.
There are no views represented**

**other than this gung-ho enthusiasm
for war. From every military base**

**intelligence and publicity personnel
fan out to offer their services to media**

**as part-time advisers and experts.
They explain and make palatable**

all the President's policies, e.g.,
allowing no photos of flag-draped

coffins bound for Arlington or home
town cemeteries, though it would be

hard to find one that has not added
a few from overseas to its holdings.

Every technique described by Orwell
or practiced by Goebbels is in place,

but so far few have dared say so.

by David Ray from *The Death of Sardanapalus and Other Poems of the Iraq Wars*.
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I think some Americans are unhappy because of indoctrination encouraging us to be militaristic and gung ho for foreign adventure. It and our frenetic pace, creates a hectic lifestyle and massive heartburn! For others, intolerance comes quite naturally and they are quite happy to go along with whatever the ministry of propaganda tells them to do. Funny how even our children are hooked on Red Bull and other “energy” drinks. The Brits probably rue the day they started taxing our tea and forced us to drink the more highly caffeinated drink coffee. Who know, if they had let us drink Black Pecoe, we may have never agitated for independence!

“Tin soldiers and Nixon’s coming”... with their night vision scopes, tanks and body armor, the armed forces can protect or threaten our freedom. Currently, I see them as the emissaries of a twisted corrupt administration, but they wouldn’t have to be, if we elected better leaders. Look what happened at Kent state... could that, will that happen again?

Fighting over the same piece of real estate has been a major problem since the beginning of time. Whether it’s a bidding war over prime LA property, or a shooting war over oil rich lands far away, the plot changes very little. Einstein was reportedly a cultural Jew, by some accounts not necessarily a believing or practicing Jew and many Christians are the same. They tend to support their religions agenda on a historical or affiliation basis. It’s difficult to arrive at peaceful solutions to inter-religious conflicts when the negotiators are cemented to the core beliefs of their “team.”

One irony regarding Einstein, was his August 2, 1939 letter to FDR advising him of the possibility of “extremely powerful bombs of a new type.” As a member of the persecuted Jewish people his lobbying on the behalf of the atom bomb was natural. It’s a bit like the torture issue, if your loved ones are at grave risk, you are likely to

do things counter to your peaceful instincts. On the other hand is the weaker argument that “two wrongs don’t make a right” and the observation that escalation of violence usually leads to even greater violence.

Peace in the Middle East will have to be designed and implemented by the people there. How could it possibly be achieved? That’s the challenge for the Middle Easterners. One person one vote? Justice liberty and equality for all? Will they choose a rational approach or a cataclysmic apocalyptic course.

Personally, I consider FOX news little more than a mouthpiece for the neocon administration, but that doesn’t mean they won’t turn on him if it suits them. FOX’s founder Rupert Murdoch is an arch neocon, and you can google his background if you’re interested in finding out why that is so. If what I’ve read is true, it simply follows the usual pattern of media ownership. Personally I think GWB is a common man, that’s why he appeals to so many people. I also think he’s a &^\$%%#, which is probably why he appeals to so many &^\$#@...

We invaded Iraq, because they violated UN resolutions and had WMDs... how does this differ from Israel’s behavior? It differs in that Israel has violated more UN resolutions and has far more WMDs, than Iraq ever had. This tells you something about US integrity, we never looked at the log in Israel’s eye. Saddam was a brutal, vicious dictator, the Israelis government is not as outwardly barbaric, but in the final analysis, they are just as vicious when it comes to their treatment of the Palestinian people.

Almost across the board, I’m for tweaking not overthrowing or revolutions.

December 12, 2005, CNN presents, 8:55 pm, an Iraqi father who’s family was shot by US troops and died in the fiery explosion that followed was not as bitter as you’d expect. He said it was a price he was willing to pay for freedom for his country... the unrecognizable corpses of his family said nothing... and we can only guess how they would feel about freedom for their country.

Ayad Allawi says human rights violations are about as bad now as they were under Saddam. Now that we’ve stirred the kettle what will we do to put the lid back on this powder keg, we are failing to control the sectarian violence and when will we leave Iraq? The joke around here is we’ll leave after the last barrel of oil’s been pumped out of the ground.

The dictatorships all across the Middle East are despicable, but the US intervention may not have been a positive overall action. Taliban like regimes are in my opinion utterly wrong, but I’m not sure we should be attacking them, any more than we should attack primitives in Africa, New Guinea and elsewhere that take gross advantage of women and other citizens.

Chapter Four

We accuse the Arabs of being barbaric and living by the feud, but we're not much different. We also retaliate violently when one of ours has been harmed. We may or may not be more likely to forgive and forget, or rely on the legal system for justice... but especially in international conflicts we don't seem to score higher than anyone else.

Why did the Arab youths attack the life guards in Sydney, Australia back in 2004? Funny how the Arabs are portrayed as the bigger cowards, for their hit and run attacks, while the hundreds of whites who attacked individuals or small groups of Arabs generally were not.

Our military should be a self defense force and as such, most of it should be guarding our porous borders, especially the southern one.

Using the bully pulpit is bad enough as it is, but it's even worse when it's used for blatantly partisan politics, not humanitarian reasons.

Since it's impossible for everyone to come to America, we are eagerly trying to extend our culture to every distant shore. Easy credit, conspicuous consumption, fast food, idol worship... you name it, we've got it and most of the world seems to want it!

America is a great country, we just need to keep tweaking it into an improved system and society. The catch is, we can't agree what that means, or how to do it... everyone has their own agenda and they conflict.

Was the Iraq invasion worth it? Worth it to who? Us or "them" and who is "them?" There are at least three major ethnic groups there. The old axiom "don't look a gift horse in the mouth" may be pertinent... but you'd have to ask the groups in Iraq about the horse's mouth.

Was Saddam a psychopath or just your run of the mill cruel dictator with delusions of grandeur? In either case, he violated all the conventions of civilization... allegedly raping attractive women that were grabbed from off of the street, as well as gassing, torturing and murdering the Iraqi people. Iraq may have been a very difficult country to hold together, but there is no excuse for what he's said to have done. History has been replete with psychopathic strongmen; Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Saddam, etc. etc.

Someone in a chat room calculated that American civilians are more likely to be killed violently in Washington DC, than American soldiers are to die violently in Iraq... can that be true? I wouldn't be surprised that it is.

For the PTB, the best result would be that Iraq become a compliant puppet state, selling oil to us at a reasonable price, until they run out. The second best result, would be confusion and even civil war for the next twenty years and thirdly, a Shiite victory in Iraq, which might allow Iraq and Iran to create a united front against the Sunni Arab states and create a stalemate or religious war between the Muslim factions... many of the neocon's would love that.

Meanwhile the Pentagon is reportedly monitoring and collecting information for a data base on domestic anti-war groups... some things never change. America seems to be of and for the necons and the military industrial complex... but that's okay with the people, as they have largely been co-opted into this system and are dependent on it. It's a brave new world indeed!

The war in Iraq, tragic as it is, may not be the worst thing for Islam, because if the Muslims presented a united front and serious threat to the survival of Israel, that country or the crusaders states would most likely nuke them into oblivion.

On the radio, the expert says the US has no hegemonious intent in Iraq or the Middle East, but I beg to differ. We are likely to maintain bases there as long as necessary to guarantee oil, Israel and Arab disunity. The only way we'll leave before then, will be if our loses become to great and public opinion demands it... fat chance!

Bush says invading Iraq was the right decision and that the world is better off without Saddam in power. I agree with the second part, but I'm not sure it was worth the first part of his statement.

Everyone should be held accountable for political assassinations be the alleged perpetrators Syrians, Israelis or western governments. It's interesting that Rumsfeld allegedly cancelled a trip to Germany, perhaps because of war crime charges leveled at him by the EU.

Regarding torture, the law professor says the US could still torture in extreme cases, but the okay would have to come from the president so he could not pass the buck, which makes torture endemic, since no one has to accept the responsibility for approving it.

As long as there's not another major terrorist attack against the US while he's in office, Bush will always be able to hang his hat on that success... much as I dislike him, I hope he succeeds in that department.

If Israel wants peace and a two state solution, why do they continue to aggressively expand their west bank settlements? Both sides should stop bombing each other and start negotiating in earnest. We seem to think that the Arabs aren't as attached to their land as we are... this despite them having lived in that region much longer

than we've lived on our land. From what I know, I'd say Gandhi was the shining light of the last millennium. If I truly admire him I should not advocate any form of violence except in legitimate self defense.

My experiences as an Arab American who has observed prejudice against my people, should have tempered my biases against others, but have they? On this day, I wonder if the Ishmael factor is utterly false or perhaps partly true, I firmly believe it's not completely true. I also wonder if stereotypes about other human populations are similarly utterly false or perhaps partly true... I believe that at the very least, these are not completely true.

For the past several centuries, I don't think that my Arab brothers and cousins have lived up to our potential, but I think we can. Torture and the enactment of unjust laws usually seems to depend on what's at stake and who's ox is being gored. Stop torturing people unless there's an extraordinary situation and get the hell out of the Middle East.

Were the Israelites ever the majority in the ancient holy land and if so was it by ethnic cleansing and genocide? Why is it that pro-Israelis from around the world can pour billions of dollars of economic and military aid into occupied Palestine, but if the same is attempted by supporters of the Palestinians people are criminally prosecuted.... And we have the nerve to say we're even handed in our approach to the conflict!

Bush wants to extend the Patriot act to protect us, and he wants to continue the war on the Muslim world so that we'll need the Patriot act... it's a vicious circle that works well for those who stand to benefit from perpetual war.

There's no one I can vote for, no one who represents me in the least... if we had menu style elections, marginalized voters might be able to pick and choose candidates on an ala carte basis.

Wars collectively punish the citizens of nations, think of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and Dresden for example. Wars also financially benefit the elites of the nations involved, primarily the elite of the winning nations. I think all governments are in a sense criminal enterprises, as they are based on protection, perpetuation and ascendancy of the ruling class. Since prehistoric times, human societies have been structured to enforce customs or "mores" that benefit the powerful.. The common folk have come along for the ride, because they get jobs, promises of advancement and if they rebel... they get the ax.

Every generation or two, some nations enter into conflicts with their neighbors in order to get the upper hand. I don't think that Israel is worse than Iran, or vice versa, or that China is much worse than the US although in theory one system might offer greater potential for freedom. In practice it seems to boil down to one thing, might makes right, the winners are selectively rewarded and the losers are

collectively punished. This system has been so pervasive that it may never end... but hopefully its time is going to come to an end! Even neutrals like the Swiss are not innocent, they took holocaust riches looted from Jews by the Nazis and tried their best to withhold it from the victims relatives.

Since there is often collective punishment of the civilian population in countries that are losing wars, does it mean that such punishment is just? Perhaps they should have trimmed their governments mustache, or does it just point to might being right no matter what the fight? I think it's a little of both, since we should demand governments that are fair and just, unfortunately the civilians who are punished are as often from the non or less aggressive country, as they are from the aggressor nation.

VP Cheney offered the perfect defense for charges that the Bush administration abused its powers by surveilling the email, phone calls and key strokes of its own citizens... he said it's no accident that there have been no more terrorist attacks in the USA. This holds water with most Americans and can not popularly be rebutted... heck it holds water with me up to a point. It goes along with torturing terror suspects, surveilling Americans and blowing people up with unmanned missile wielding aircraft... when it's our lives that are at stake, almost all of us are willing to take extreme measures.

The neocons may have calculated, that an Shiite dominated Iraq, would put pressure on Iran to be less belligerent or assertive.

Despite the fact that they are complete ninnyes and chickens, the members of congress are loathe to confront Bush on his violations of constitutional rights to privacy, because he would then call them traitors, unpatriotic and imply they are anti-Christian... there are few if any that could stand up to such attacks.

One of the neocons arguments is that by spreading our freedoms and opportunities to those living under oppressive conditions, we make ourselves safer and foreigners better off. If that's true, shouldn't we be liberating and bringing true democracy to Mexicans and Central Americans? Would we no longer have to worry about so many illegal immigrants flooding across our border, because they'd have what they need in their own countries? Well we're not spreading our form of democracy to them and we're not doing much about illegal immigration... I guess some one over here is getting rich from all that cheap labor and that must be the most important thing.

Regarding Israeli tank commander Rappaport's claim that an angel directed him away from where an Arab bomb was about to explode, I am skeptical... what can I say? I put it in the same category as other fundamentalists claims, I can't discount it, but I'm not convinced any more than I am about UFO abductions or anything else of that nature. Will the fundamentalists save America, destroy it, or will society just keep on trucking?

Theoretically you can liberate 20 million Iraqis from a brutal dictator... although the outcome is still a murky one. Or you can spend that trillion or so dollars improving treatments for dozens of diseases and improve the lives of 6 billion people. You... however are engaged in a religious crusade and a business venture in the Middle East. When you're through, you expect to have hundreds of millions of new customers, submissive populations and fertile missions fields.

When you ask me to march for breast cancer, diabetes research, etc... I really should, but my way of helping these causes is writing to encourage people to vote for candidates who will spend our treasure on medical research and other peaceful scientific pursuits, not on military adventures.

Another thing about wars, is that they are so hard to stop once they are allowed to start... think long and hard before you start one and consider the guaranteed, unintended consequences. "Our system is better than yours, so like it or not, we're going to replace yours with ours" ... this is usually not a good idea.

The people who work the hardest at it, will run things... including our lives. It's good to work hard, but it's not so good to run other peoples lives for them. It's not good for them or for you.

Is America the greatest nation in the world? We could be... it just depends on who you ask, or are able to ask. For those who automatically call me an America hater for raising the issue, I say, what's wrong with asking tough questions? If we are a great nation, we will be able to stand up to scrutiny. So, if you were somehow able to ask the native Americans who perished from violence and disease over the last 500 years what would they say? Would you even care... I think a lot of American's would? Not all Americans believe the Indian holocaust and African slavery were just collateral damage and the cost of doing business.

Now you're tapping the phones of Quakers because they don't support the war... hmm? The American people as a whole don't mind Quakers, peace-niks and Arabs having their lines tapped... some won't care unless theirs are tapped... after all they say, we're not doing anything wrong, so we have nothing to hide. You may not be doing anything "wrong" yet, but you never really when (not if) things will change and how broad the definition of "wrong" may become. So yes, go ahead and tap phones and use ethnic profiling... if they are effective, but don't forfeit your hard won rights on a wholesale basis... we may never get them back.

I think some people may be born warriors, just look at all the martial cultures from the Vikings to the Zulus. It's the same old bell curve theory, in every culture there are workers, soldiers and brainiacs... there's also a fair degree of overlap and complementation. Some cultures seem to produce slightly more warriors or farmers than the next, but every viable human population seems capable of morphing into a militaristic group. Over the course of a million years, we evolved from tree dwelling

apes, into apex predators, fighting everything from lions to each other... now in the past two thousand and especially in the last couple hundred, we have been encouraged to lay down our weapons... it's a worthy goal, but not an easy or especially natural one.

We are indoctrinated to conform to societies norms *and* to criticize those that don't. In fact we are subtly encouraged by the "powers that be" not only to criticize mavericks, but to ridicule, marginalize and if necessary eliminate them.

Even if all the Muslims in the world who are sympathetic to the west agitated for peace, that outcome would be unlikely - unless the west acted as an unbiased arbitrator of the Palestinian "problem" and that seems highly unlikely.

If we ever got serious about addressing the root causes of terrorism, we wouldn't have to worry about the government infringing on our constitutional right to privacy. Unfortunately, since we don't seem to have any plans to address these issues, we should expect the government to go much farther. It seems abundantly clear, (to me anyway), that our government has no intention whatsoever, to address the root cause of terrorism... the Palestinian question that is, in an unbiased, non-sectarian manner. America, the most Christian of western nations, acts on the premise that, "the Bible says it, America believes it and that settles it." How can we be a fair arbitrator when we are that biased? I heard a fundamentalist leader quoted the other day as saying we have to read between the lines when we listen to George Bush... he isn't willing to come right out and say he's pushing for an apocalyptic show down with Islam, but that's his end game... unless the Muslim's submit to his interpretation of God's will. Pitted against Bush is the president of Iran and others who may be equally dogmatic, but on the flip side of the coin.

Ismael factor? I don't believe it's true for a minute, but for a *second* I think it's possible.

The US soldiers with the supervision of their chaplains pray, most of them to Jesus... so lets face it, we are a Christian nation and a militant one at that. "Jesus is Lord" the no holds barred fighter's T shirt says... the back might as well say... and I'm going to kick your ass. I wonder what would Jesus think about all this "righteous" violence in his name? Some claim it is necessary, albeit *perhaps* unfortunate, in order to usher in the millennial kingdom of Jesus Christ... I hope you know what you're talking about, but am not confident that you know much about anything but greed, intolerance and hate.

It was Christmas day and on FOX TV Scott Bleier from Hybridinvesting.com? spoke about how the Iranians will have to be dealt with soon... otherwise he advises, we will have to pay a very high price for oil and he implies a high price in lives...

My opinion is that we owe a large debt of gratitude to the military, but that and we must also keep close tabs on it. While their sacrifices have been enormous, the

excesses have been too frequent and everyone from privates to commanders in chiefs have been guilty. War takes young people in the primes of their lives and does terrible things to their bodies and minds... that's paraphrased from a WWII vet on TV. Along with the movies and video games that glorify war, the history channel is also chock full of military mayhem and murder. Here are a couple of examples that come to mind; War Stories with Oliver North, Mail Call with R.Lee Ermey, etc.

Funny how we've had two very openly "born again" presidents in the last 30 years... Jimmy Carter was a peaceful man, who I believe, had been in harms way in WWII. George W. Bush *somehow* avoided harms way and for whatever reason turned out (in my opinion), to be a war monger.

Was Hiroshima justifiable? Those who had to make the decision thought so, those of us looking back on the event debate it, those who were annihilated have no voices. One thing you can say about the Americans, at least in recent history, they have treated the people they defeat better than most conquerors.

Who else gets excited when they see regional weather maps on TV? I search the topography for my little piece of ground and follow the lines representing the highways from my house to my little farm many miles away. Maybe that's why my Arab cousins get agitated when they think that their lands are being threatened... if they're like me, they enjoy any representations of their land and jealously defend it.

It won't be long before we'll have spent a trillion dollars "liberating" Iraq. Is it better to spend that huge sum to "liberate" 20 million Iraqis as Rumsfeld crowed about on Christmas eve from the ruins of an Iraqi city, or would it be better to spend that treasure on peaceful technologies that would benefit the six billion inhabitants of our planet? Every once in a while there's a story on the news about the army sending a sick Iraqi or Afghan child home for medical treatment, yet our government spends only hundreds of millions per year on medical research compared to hundreds of billions on the military... it would be so nice if that ratio could be reversed.

You refuse to openly negotiate with insurgents, terrorists or whatever you want to call the "enemy" and you say that you will settle for nothing less than total victory. You may have to wipe out most or all of the Muslim world to achieve this. There's little doubt in my mind that you are prepared to commit mass murder instead of stooping to fairly addressing the Palestinian "problem." It's ironic that the Israelis and the Americans *may* be on a path of solving the "Palestinian problem" in a manner similar to how Hitler tried to solve the "Jewish problem"... although it looks like they'll use nukes to incinerate their victims not crematoriums.

Recently allegations surfaced that the NSA is dropping "thirty year cookies" into our PCs when we visit various websites. Forget about the eastern block being Big Brother, the US is dangerously close to becoming the ultimate "Big Brother"

because it has the technology to surveil its citizens like no other nation on world...

Like Wallad Jumblah the Druze leader in the Lebanon, I am living on a fault line, straddling two cultures... is it any wonder I see shades of grey?

Funny how FOX news calls Muslim suicide bombers “homicide bombers”, while Israeli and American sky pilots who wreak even more mayhem are portrayed as heroic. One may claim to be headed to Paradise and the other, if killed expects a heavenly reward, but they are all killing innocent people... in violation of the First Commandment and that speaks for itself. If we send a man on a “suicide mission” he is accorded the greatest respect for his bravery, while their “martyrs” are considered vile cowards. Both sides justify their murderous actions with eloquent speeches, but they are doing the devils work, not God’s. Our religious fundamentalist leaders say that Allah is not the God of the Bible, and that may or may not be correct, but it’s still a red Herring. I don’t think either sides “God” is anything more than a jingoistic corporate entity that enjoys tax free status. In both the Muslim world and the Christian, the religious establishment is controlled by an elitist core that is simply another branch of the status quo... forget about checks and balances, when the various branches are all part of the same tree. Where is the God of the universe who cares for the meek and the poor? I wonder if he inhabits religions proud buildings?

As in days of old, the government lies to the people for the peoples own “good.” Now at least they occasionally admit to it, although those admissions are simply cynical double speak. They’ve convinced many of us that disinformation is the best information... after all, what we don’t know can’t hurt us, we’re told. Oh well at least they don’t stretch us on the rack anymore... at least not in the good old USA, that kind of persuasion is out sourced to some of our less savory allies.

There’s another story in the news about US servicemen sponsoring surgery for a two year old Iraqi girl who during a raid on her home, was discovered to be afflicted with spinal bifida. This is a humane and generous act on the part of the servicemen, but why not spend the hundreds of billions that we spend on war, on peace and healing instead... wouldn’t more people benefit? Instead many Americans consider the Iraqis hell bound heathen, or “ingrates” for not showering us with flower pedals... even as we bomb them. Since Iraq is comprised of different and competing religious groups, it will be very difficult for us to impose democracy on them from the barrel of a gun... but that’s okay, since our leaders would prefer them to be at war with each other than at war with Israel. This may not be so bad for the Muslims in the long run, since to be at war with Israel and American could very well mean nuclear annihilation for them.

On the radio, Daniel Pipes states that the US policy is, and should be to inflict as much pain on the Palestinians as is necessary in order to make them give up their struggle. Only then, he states will they be able to benefit from the prosperity that Israeli governance might bring them. He may be right, or he may be terribly

wrong, since not all Palestinians will be happy having material benefits, but being debt slaves to the occupiers of their land. Pipes' ideology fits in nicely with the New World Order as he too considers people the property of government. When the elite decide on a policy, the goyim should be persuaded by tax policy, financial incentives/disincentives or if necessary by force, to embrace the path chosen for them. The human cattle are to be managed for the "own good" by their more intelligent and enlightened masters.

Pipes seems upset that after the Oslo Accords were signed, the puppet governments of the Middle East could not "deliver" their populations to the course that Tel Aviv had charted for them. Since the carrot did not work, he's all for employing the stick. Pipes calls himself a historian, but never concedes that he is incredibly biased. He states that conflicts between nations are almost never solved via diplomacy and must instead be settled by the application of crushing force to make one side submit to the will of the other. He wants the US to pressure the Palestinians to give up their goals and to acquiesce to the will of the neocons.

On the radio, they mention that McDonalds is part of the underground railroad for Muslims who are trying to reach the west. McDonalds is usually not subject to immigration raids and is seen as a symbol of western prosperity and global capitalism. Human smugglers and their clients meet there to plan their escape from repressive Muslim regimes and to chart a course to the west... interesting, but I wonder if it's true, or is something else going on?

Maybe I see things in shades of grey because I am a middle child and we are peacemakers. None of us alone are capable of making peace, but if we can play a small part... we should be ready, willing and available.

Should the Iraqis accept the occupation and work within the system for the betterment of society? It sounds like a pretty good idea, but it's the Iraqi people who have to decide and so far the verdict is not in.

I think it was Mark Twain who said America always does the right thing, but not until it has exhausted all other possibilities. That seems somewhat true, but at least in our system it is possible to finally do the right thing... possible, but not assured.

We need debate, not open conflict on everything from the Middle East, coastal hurricane policy, health care, immigration, tax policy, eminent domain etc. The debate should not be influenced by money, but instead by accurate, unbiased information... as jaded as I am, I still think this is possible.

I don't want America defeated, but I wouldn't mind seeing the demise of the neocons ideology of New World Order, crusade and conquest. All that they have accomplished is death, destruction and chaos... maybe that's what they want... isn't the New World Order's slogan something like "order out of chaos."

Chapter Five

Although it's more humble to say that "we hope we are on God's side", the self-righteous have found that saying "God is on our side" is a much better marketing tool.

The Jewish people are brilliant, but unless they are truly chosen by God to rule over us, they should not be given anything even approaching carte blanche. Since I don't believe that they are chosen over us, they should not by virtue of their brains, money or anything else, be making decisions for the rest of humanity... I suppose you'll say they aren't.

There's a low level civil war going on in Iraq and it's an understatement to say the civilians are bearing the brunt of the violence.

Nations as well as men and women, should learn and possess the means for self defense. If not they are likely to be preyed upon, or become dependent on others for security. The problem is, that when we become too accomplished at self defense skills, we tend to become aggressors ourselves.

After the raid, the embedded reporter said he had the feeling the Iraqis might just be telling him what they thought he wanted to hear. Hmmm? Let's see now, the soldiers; broke down their door, ransacked the house, pointed M-16 rifles at them, demanded information and then called them liars... do you really think they're going to be frank with an embedded report while the soldiers are still there? Unless the reporter comes back without the troops, we should take the comments elicited with a grain or three of salt.

We came, we saw, we conquered, we're occupying... and they're still resisting... things could continue like this for a long time.

If I was born with black curly hair and an olive complexion, you probably wouldn't be surprised that I think like I do, but since I look more like "you" than like "them" you're shocked, dismayed and angered by my views.

Israel is our ally, a democracy, under siege and has a right to exist the pundit said. He's arguing his case for why we should isolate Hamas and cut off aid to the Palestinians. True, Israel is our ally, but are other countries that were doing questionable things... and don't forget that George Washington said not to form permanent alliances. Israel is under siege, but are they not also occupying Palestinian land? Israel has a right to exist he says, and I agree the Jewish people have a right to exist, but whether or not they have the right to control Palestine can and should be debated. They are a democracy as he says, but don't Israeli, Jewish

“citizens” have privileges that Palestinian “subjects” do not. He goes on to say that money talks and that until Hamas recognizes Israel and disarms, they should be starved. So, what good is it to encourage the Palestinians to have democratic elections if you immediately reject the results, since they didn’t vote the way you wanted them to? It is simply another form of oppression and black mail to threaten them with sanctions and violence for not electing the puppets you proffered.

You are so proud of your warriors... I am proud of the warriors who have renounced violence, that takes even more courage than killing people and breaking things. The “reformed” warriors are still brave, they just refuse to pillage and plunder for man or for manna. I’m not saying you can’t be a good man and a warrior, but killing for hire is a slippery slope, no matter who’s paying you.

I didn’t listen to Bush’s State of the Union speech in it’s entirety, just the highlights. He said something to the effect that the only way to control our destiny was to do something about the world’s problems. I think that means that he and his cronies will tell the rest of us what to do and viola, “they” will be in control of their destiny... and ours. The famous German military scholar Karl von Clausewitz stated that, “war is the continuation of politics by other means” and that has been the western approach to diplomacy, certainly it has been Bush’s. The president’s speech writers have him pushing all the “right” emotional buttons and this is followed with them beating us over the head with nationalism and “patriotism.” His handlers are masters at turning lemons into lemonade, if Al Queda strikes again they will use that to rally the troops and if we aren’t attacked, they will use *that* to claim Bush is a great president.

They keep telling us that we’re over there spreading democracy to the Iraqis and defending our freedom. Sorry, but I have to take that with a grain of salt... most of what I see on the news about Iraq, is death and destruction - not freedom and democracy.

Iran may be a country held hostage by a religious elite, but the people may still want a nuclear deterrent. I feel like I’m also living in a country controlled by a religious elite and we seem to feel more secure having the bomb too. The Iranians play to the same nationalistic impulses as George Bush and his pals play to. Both sides frame the argument... and it’s an argument, not a debate, in terms of us and them, good and evil.

It’s interesting that Cindy Sheehan and a republican woman were both booted from the State of the Union speech for wearing T-shirts with opposite messages. I suppose the authorities trying to appear even handed?

Regarding all politicians... please refer to what Roy Rogers and Mark Twain had to say...

Almost immediately after Hamas won the Palestinian election, Israel announced

that it would stop sharing custom revenues collected at Palestinian borders with the Palestinian authority. Money talks and that's just one more weapon to be used against the Palestinian people. You may call it a way to target Hamas and not the Palestinian people, but it sound like fairly run of the mill strong arm tactics none the less. For those proposing a "two state" system in Palestine, I wonder if it will be two equal states, or more like our own Indian "reservation" system.

Funny how the nations that have used nukes against civilians, or have had horrendous purges of their own people under totalitarian dictators during the 20th century, are so anxious to maintain their monopoly on the possession and potential use of these horrible WMD.

The ethnic conflict flaring up between; Kurds, Arabs, Turkomans, Assyrians etc. in Kirkuk, Iraq, show the difficulties of what we're trying to "accomplish." Beat your swords into plowshares and your F-16s and MIGs into farm tractors.

I think the UN mirrors the US... both are run by wealthy elitists - supposedly for the benefit of everyone. Meanwhile "poor" or "weak" special interest groups lobby and protest for their "rights" and their piece of the pie. The "powers that be" act and legislate as if they're representing what's best for the rest of us, but they seem to be the ones that benefit the most!

In the 2006 State of the Union Address, Bush reportedly said our goal is to replace 75% of our mid east oil imports by 2025... right!

If you're impressed with our current president, you might be the kind of person who is impressed with princes and kings... after all, despite his hard work, GW Bush could be said to have been born into his position.

Many people on both sides of the conflict don't want to meet in the middle, but many other do. It won't be exactly in the middle and will fluctuate depending on the issue being considered, but some of us would rather meet in the middle than on the killing field... I guess you'll say that means we're cowards.

The Pentagon has announced some of the results of their Quadrennial Defense Review. They focus on how to combat unconventional forces... unlike a doctor, they and their military industrial complex buddies never want to go out of business.

The blonde news babe on Fox said she didn't find the caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed that offensive, despite him being portrayed with a bomb for a turban etc. She's just belying the bias of the Fox news organization, as well as expressing the feelings of many of the American people. Her colleague said he would not like a caricature of Jesus with a bomb on his head and she replied that Christians might not like it, but they wouldn't mount violent protests. She may or may not be correct about that, but then again they wouldn't have to, their holy warriors are already bombing and killing Muslims on a daily basis.

What do I think about the cartoon controversy? It doesn't much matter what I think, but I wouldn't be surprised if it will make you believe even more strongly that Muslims are crazy and make you feel even more confident that bombing them is the "right" thing to do.

Bush says that the decision to send Iran to the UN Security council over their nuclear ambitions does not mean the end of his "diplomatic" efforts. I interpret that as meaning that he's ready to pull a Von Clausewitz and switch to "the continuation of politics by other means", which means war.

You seem to believe almost everything our leaders and the various news outlets tell you... that's too bad...

I'm not saying that they're not irresponsible and shouldn't have nukes, I agree with that... I also think anyone that would recommend, authorize or actually use nukes is similarly irresponsible and needs to be disarmed. If you are willing to kill hundreds of thousands, if not millions of civilians and possibly trigger a nuclear winter then you're as nuts as they are. In both cases, the protagonists are willing to do absolutely anything to get their way... that is criminality at it's worst. Unfortunately, if given the power, almost everyone on the planet would authorize absolutely anything to "save their way of life" and get their way.

Some people came out of the desert and saw a land of milk and honey. They told the inhabitants that God has given them this land and you and had better clear out. You stand their in amazement, almost bemused, until they start butchering you and your families... at that point you realize that they are quite serious. Now... if you're engaged in something horrendous like sacrificing babies, then maybe you're getting your just deserts... but I don't know if that's true. We should be trying to improve our society all the time, or someone might come along and do it for us. Trim your mustache, before invaders come to give you a "chain saw" haircut.

How nice to hear that the troops will be able to watch the Super Bowl after completing their daily chores... Our church is sending them girl scout cookies and perhaps they'll be enjoying some of the other niceties of life... beer, whiskey, cigarettes... whatever.

Bush said: "You bet, we'll defend Israel."... Washington Post - Thursday, February 2, 2006; Page A18. George W. is not a great student of history, or else he'd take into consideration what the original George W. said about permanent foreign alliances.

The Brits are justifiably proud of their history and accomplishments, but their record is only worthy of qualified praise... they've done at least as much harm as good. That's why the sun never sets on the British empire... even God doesn't trust an Englishman in the dark.

The American people completely misunderstand why some Middle Easterners don't like us. It's our foreign policy, not our freedom they oppose... and pouring gasoline on a burning Middle Eastern is unlikely to extinguish the fire. Those who influence you by their writing, ideology, media etc. are quite happy that you are playing into their hands...

Why would I care if the government is monitoring my emails, when I'm anxiously awaiting a free government lobotomy? Let them tap my phone and read my mail it doesn't bother me in the least! Realistically, you've got to do, what you've got to do, but we should also address the root causes of terrorism in a rational, unbiased manner. We should meet with our adversaries somewhere, maybe, not exactly in the middle, but we shouldn't demand that others unconditionally accept our views of the world. There's hatred and reason on both sides, can't we come together, just a little bit? Don't you both say that Isaac and Ishmael were brothers and that Jacob and Esau were brothers. Granted they got off on the wrong foot a long time ago, but they were family! Maybe if we tweaked and they tweaked we could find a bit of common ground.

The derogatory Danish cartoons about Mohammed now have Danes concerned for their safety, which is a shame. They have effectively made their point that freedom of speech and of the press is a most valuable liberty that has to be defended. On the other hand, the pundit said there is complete freedom of the press in Denmark, unless you break the blasphemy laws, which these cartoons apparently didn't... what the heck are the blasphemy laws?

As my friend has been kind enough to remind me, this is a great country and many of it's values are worth protecting... at almost any cost. He might state it even more forcefully than that, saying it's "the" greatest nation in the world and worth protecting at any cost. I hope this beautiful land remains free, but I'm less attached to the flag and other icons than he is.

Just as many people want to come here to enjoy our freedom, others might want similar freedoms in their own lands. We should encourage that, but should also be very reluctant to impose it at the barrel of a gun, especially when our investor class is enriched in the process... that would make the whole endeavor suspect.

Why should it be surprising that I have some contradictory views of things that most Americans line up in favor of? After all, I'm half Egyptian and a Gemini... People in most other countries can objectively examine both sides of these volatile issues, but we are discouraged from anything other than cheerleading our president? Why do you demand that unlike the rest of world we Americans swallow and spout the party line?

Even moral absolutes such as the commandment "though shall not kill", seems to be applicable to the bell curve. The "absolutists" seem to have no qualms about condoning killing when they deem it "necessary" to achieve their objectives.

On the radio they were talking about the Bali bombings and how exploding gas tanks from the cars on the streets increased the panic. That's a terrible thing, but don't our bombs do the very same thing... I've seen many an image of Muslims running in panic as things blow up around them. Sometimes it's Muslim on Muslim violence and sometimes it's the coalition blowing things up.

A person - or a nation may have heard a hundred times, that pride cometh before a fall... yet our actions still cause us to trip.

I'm not saying that the warriors who have pounded their swords into plowshares are braver than other soldiers, but I do respect them for stopping the violence. Those soldiers who continue to kill upon command may also be brave, but they also derive benefit from being part of the juggernaut and from not questioning authority. Those who lay down their weapons and say I will kill no more, do not have a powerful organization to support them and they face criticism from many. When we are rewarded for liberating people, by winning control over resources or territory, it makes our actions all the more suspect. Those who benefit the most from the imposition of democracy at the point of a gun, are the financiers, military industrial complex and the investor class.

I think that having an advantage over someone and using it for gain, is often mistaken for braver. It's quite rare to see the weak jump on the strong, but it does happen occasionally and that is either bravery or foolishness. On the other hand, you frequently see the stronger person or army start something with a weaker opponent... that's mistakenly called bravery by many. The one with the advantage, often ends up being called brave, when really he's just exploiting his advantage over the weaker party... for good or bad.

The Muslims should use peaceful means to get their way and I'd say the same for the Americans and Israelis... but it doesn't look very likely that any of them will. So what will come first, the chicken the egg or will we just keep making omelets?

I saw a new invention being hawked to the Pentagon the other day... it looked like a super duper radio controlled mobile robotic Gatling gun. You simply drive it into the battle zone and mow down the "enemy", kind of like a land based unmanned flying drone with hell fire missiles. In both cases, they are useful in saving your peoples lives and killing the other side. So in a best case scenario, you might take out some really bad people and not risk injury to your own soldiers, but in reality they are likely to kill quite a few innocents.

On the radio they're discussing the problems of reaching the Iraqi people with our message and they note how nationalism runs deep in that country. I've noticed that it runs pretty deep here too... they have their extremist mullahs and others stoking it and we have our extremist pastors and others stoking it. It would be nice if we could meet somewhere close to the middle, or at least meet somewhere. Perhaps

Geneva? That's not really in the middle, so maybe the Canaries? Of course the actual place isn't nearly as important as the willingness to compromise, so leave the aforementioned nut cases at home and have reasonable people meet one another.

Just as Muslims are finding out that certain westerners want to trim their beards with a chainsaw, the capitalists may find themselves under a similar attack if they don't moderate their get rich as any cost attitudes. Of course they will not go down without a fight either... the powerful rarely do. The human game may never change - might makes right and he who has the strength to hold on to power will keep it as long as possible... but not for ever.

I had no real Arab-American identity when I was growing up. I considered myself American and very rarely thought about my roots. It wasn't till college and the Iran hostage situation that the facts became apparent and I realized that I was a half breed and an outsider. I began to realize that you can't be found acceptable and assimilate, unless you accept the history, biases and mythology of the nation you live in... otherwise uncle will give you a swift kick in the pants. I have heard enough derogatory remarks about Arabs and Muslims, "dirty this", "we should have killed more of them" etc. to believe that the goal is anything but power and dominion.

I think this country is well worth fighting for, but not necessarily in Iraq... I think we're primarily fighting for something else over there. Maybe we should be "fighting" for America over *here* and hopefully not with bullets, although unfortunately it sometimes will come to that. I just don't agree that killing people and breaking things half way around the world is the best way to preserve our freedom. How many foreigners do we have to shoot, or blow up in their homes, beds or streets to secure our freedom? Far fewer than we have... and probably none at all.

We were able to bring the army of Slobodan Milosevic to its knees with very little bombing of civilians and with very few boots on the ground. Arguably his army was comparable to Iraq's, (they even bragged that they weren't like the Iraqis!), still the neocons decided that an occupation of Iraq was necessary to achieve our grand designs.

The Iraq war is the culmination of more than fifty years of policy decisions made on the basis of "intelligence" that was fixed around dubious policy goals. We are the freer, more democratic and by some measures the "superior" culture, but the motivation and results of our actions in the Middle East are, to many Arab Americans and some others, highly debatable.

"Injustice cannot conquer principle, principle cannot conquer law, law cannot conquer power and power cannot conquer heaven"... Kusunoki Masashige (1294 - 1336).

From time to time the war mongers lobby for a good old fashioned religious war...

there are few “better” ways to rally the flock. The language the military and war mongers use is designed to legitimize murdering civilians. Phrases such as, “guaranteed target acquisition, minimal collateral damage, friendly fire, precision munitions, winning hearts and minds and other terms of “double speak” are great for marketing our leaders strategic little adventures, or, as Teddy Roosevelt put it “splendid” little wars.

I think the bravest soldier is the one who finally stands up before his comrades and declares, I will not kill another person for as long as I live. The righteous man is the one who says I will obey the commandment “thou shall not kill.” Maybe these are naïve pronouncements, but they would be refreshing none the less. A large segment of our society seems to think that being a soldier and killing heathens, is a most glorious occupation, , there is... funny how so many of these people are also among the most vocal supporters of Jesus’ teachings. I’m told that Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments in Luke 10:27 with the words, "...Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind...Love your neighbor as yourself." Hmmm... I’m trying to decide for myself anyway, if our “Christian” nation is living up to this? Granted I should be doing a lot better too, but I’m not even in a leadership position. When Jesus told his disciples to spread the gospel around the world, I don’t recall him instructing the apostles to accomplish this via bombs or bullets... not even indirectly.

Our soldiers are brave, but that doesn’t mean it is right to spread our culture by force, money, influence, intimidation, deception or subterfuge. If we can’t persuade others to “convert” by way of our good examples, then maybe, like the teacher told us... we should keep our hands to ourselves.

Dick Cheney peppered one of his hunting party at about thirty yards with his trusty Quail gun. The press is chiding the veep for not announcing this sooner and reporting that he had a license but not the proper “stamp” for shooting quail. As usual the wizards behind the curtain will make lemonade out of this.

Since the major religions frequently preach peace... why don’t they try harder to promote it? Just wondering...

Welcome to McWorld grab your spatula and start flipping burgers.

Democracy is messy, but it’s still probably the best thing out there. The problems is, you have all kinds of competing special interest groups... liberal versus conservative, men versus women and various other ethnic or life style groups. All of these have their own likes, dislikes and agendas... in general, men want somewhat different things than women ... I won’t say what each wants, but most of us know how the sexes priorities differ. On the plus side, almost everyone wants food, water, shelter and a few of the niceties of life. Every one, and every groupss should all be guaranteed their basic rights, but not the right to railroad or steam roll anyone else’s basic rights. Extraordinary rights should not be guaranteed to anyone, nor

should anything more than the most basic of needs... for anything more than that, people should work.

Christian missionaries are spending billions world wide to influence people to join their faith... other religions might consider this bribery, but no one is preventing them from doing the same. Granted, some don't have the money to do this, but others do and as far as I know, they aren't trying to keep up with the Jones'.

Reading the Time mag, I saw where the US has spent barely tens of billions for Iraq reconstruction, but I've heard we're well into the many hundreds of billions for Iraq de-construction.

It's more or less official, the Israeli parliament has voted to end payments of about \$55 million per month to the Palestinians. This is from money that the Israeli's collect "for the Palestinians" from border crossing duties etc. Is the Israeli governments decision not to deal with Hamas, which was elected by the Palestinians, different than other governments saying they won't deal with Likud, which was elected by the Israelis?

Despite appreciating the freedoms that our forefathers came to this country for, I am also aware that they were in it for the money and that's largely what I think we're still in the freedom "business" for. Power, dominion and conquest in the name of Jesus... but did Jesus really mean for you to spread his gospel over the barrel of a gun?

I can see why most species are not monogamous and why humans often fall prey to infidelity. I heard someone on the radio say that in Islam four wives is considered a good number. I don't think he explained why one wife is not enough, but he said that two wives would fight too much and with three, two would gang up on the third. He said with four you have more harmony... although one is enough for me. That's not to say that things are perfect around here, but I'm not inclined to try tearing down that system, instead I'm for encouraging everyone to treat women with respect, dignity and to voice my opposition to forced marriages anywhere. That includes the places they show on the Discovery channel where women are sold for pigs and baskets!

Bush, Putin, Hussein, Bin Laden? They're all just players in this cosmic theatre and I believe they all are misguided. When they give orders to kill people they are wrong 100% of the time... but they are also reflecting the desires of their constituents.

Countries, like people are more likely to change their ways through offering them carrots, than by beating them with sticks. It may be necessary from time to time to pull out the stick, but we've used that method too many times and for some questionable objectives.

Sometimes these corrupt systems will collapse of their own accord, but if you attack them from the outside, it gives the tyrants a means to rally the people allowing them to hang on longer.

Our president reminds me of what happens when the bosses “unqualified” son takes over the family business... he tends to run it into the ground.

Hate to be the one to say it, but this country and it’s military industrial complex are a bane on civilization. Like a doctor they should be anxious to go out of business... but that doesn’t seem to be the case.

I have difficulty seeing you as much more than Romans with internal combustion and rocket engines for you war machines. Seems to me that you’ll conquer the world or be instrumental in the destruction of the human race. Oxen and horses have been replaced with turbine engine tanks, but the spokes in the wheels are still just people. We still spread our gospel by force and it’s still wrong to flatten cities, in order to spread our culture. There’s still no iron clad guarantee or proof that our way is “the way.” Aren’t there enough injustices in our backyard to cure or alleviate? Would it not be better to spend our treasure finding ways to liberate the billions who will die from cancer or heart disease than to spend it breaking things and killing people in hopes of liberating a few million?

I don’t care to export our culture or attack some one else’s, but I wish we could discuss things more rationally... march to the beat of your drummer and let me march to mine.

The proponents of democracies and caliphates say they are for human rights, but neither has a great track record. I would say, however that the democracies hold the edge in this category... although it’s not as substantial an edge as they’d have us believe.

Just because we’ve been at odds with, or at each other’s throats for a million years doesn’t mean we can’t get along, it just means it probably won’t be easy. I appreciate that our military has gone all over the place to protect us... Germany comes to mind in WW II... but I still think they have a tendency to get carried away.

“And they’re only going to change this place by Killing everybody in the human race”... Sting & Police

If you give countries foreign aid, they become dependent on it. If you don’t, they might be more likely to work out their problems and depose their corrupt rulers... isn’t that natural? Either way, the common person suffers from the excesses of the rich. Although there are good things about giving humanitarian aid, it doesn’t motivate people to figure things out for themselves. Cruel as it sounds, social Darwinism should be re-examined.

We can meet somewhere in the middle... in some cases it will be closer to our view, in other cases it will be closer to theirs. Otherwise we can just wash our hands of each other, or keep fighting, until one side destroys the other, or we until we both destroy each other.

Regarding the “three great Abrahamic religions”, at any given time, it seems like two of them are ganging up on the third. At this time in history, it seems to be the Christians and Jews determined to wring out the Muslims, who are about one-fifth of the human race... that’s hardly a formula for peace and tranquility.

TPTB constantly preach about spreading democracy, but when Hamas or some other party they disapprove of comes to power, they refuse to recognize the result of the democratic process. Democracy like everything else, seems to be conditional.

Poor Jill Carroll was held by the insurgents. She is credited with trying to cover the war objectively... but is such a thing possible? I applaud her for trying and for her bravery, but feared mightily for her life.

There’s nothing good that I can say about the Taliban or Saddam, but I wonder if we do not unite their “subjects” when we mount broad based attacks that kill innocent people and we end up in de-facto control of the oil under their land? If we are to truly affect change, there should not be collateral damage, or financial and geo-political gain associated with our actions. Our drones, smart bombs and snipers should at the most only take out the monsters that oppress their own people. We might also deal with our own sheriff of Nottingham and his henchmen in a more peaceful way... such as impeachment, or even war crime trials.

You’ve successfully talked our kids into killing Muslims to save Muslims... and to save our way of life. We are giving them the opportunity to become debt slaves like the rest of us... the strange thing, is that half of the Muslims are all for it. Take your choice, be blown up by an American precision guided 500 pound bomb, or an insurgents precision guided garbage truck, also packed with 500 pounds of high explosives. Either way it’s usually innocents that are in the right place at the wrong time.

I have the luxury to be a social critic and I realize that in many other countries I would not have that luxury - but there are quite a few countries where I would have even more freedom than I have here. I’m also aware that most of the free countries are so called “Christian nations” and that many of them are at least currently peace loving. I’m reminded frequently that they have that luxury because of our military and I think there’s some truth to that... how much, I’m not sure.

I think that some of the local pastors preach as much hate as some of the mullahs... they’re just a little more sophisticated in the art of obfuscation.

Chapter Six

Our president? I probably wouldn't vote for him *again*.

You say "they" are fighting us because they hate democracy, I think that at most, the fear democracy will rob them of what they see as their birthright. They can see that when women have more than 50% of the votes, they will win not only what is theirs, but also what is their man's. I can't say that community property is utterly wrong... but I will say I don't think it's fair - to the greatest extent possible, a man or a woman should "own" their output... by the way, I think for the most part "they" are fighting us, because we're occupying their lands.

A world view where there's only one correct or valid truth or right way is bad enough, but it's a lot worse when that's combined with a belief that this world view must be spread by hook or by crook.

Horowitz is on TV calling people "fifth columnists" for protesting the policies that he champions. That's a difficult charge to counter... as his argument strikes at his audience's emotions and he pushes all the right buttons for his agenda. I am likely to be called a traitor or anti-Semite, if I disagree, with his Middle East agenda... but didn't George Washington tell us to avoid permanent foreign alliances?

I hate to say it, but as often as not, men in uniform... necessary as they might occasionally be, are the biggest threat to freedom that you'll ever face.

Flagg Youngblood of the Young Americans Foundation who opposes the Taliban student being admitted to Yale, has chosen quite the name for his agenda, and Fox news, which is interviewing him is serving a treat to it's jingoist news craving audience.

It seems to me that our massive military industrial complex has two rather simple goals... perpetuate itself and protect the status quo.

Even my eyes aren't solidly in one camp or the other, they are hazel and can't decide if they want to be green or brown... which is fine with me. Regardless of your jeers and accusations, I think that there are absolutes... no murder, rape, pillage or plundering to list a few. The next question is, "are there exceptions to absolutes?" and I suppose that by definition they shouldn't be.

I am however, undecided about dogma, which is also fine with me... You might be surprised at what I will fight for and what I won't. In any case, it's unlikely to be the list that you or mad King George is trying to foist on us.

Even though it's perfectly legal to read the Koran here, you can expect mostly negative responses from your friends and neighbors for doing so... of course that's a heck of a lot better than what happens to people trying to read the Bible in certain countries - I'll grant you that one.

"An army of one, be all that you can be, the few the proud the marines"... Uncle Sam wants you and he's hired Madison Avenue to talk you into hearing his call .

There are so many potential benefits to spending our treasure on peace, not war. This morning they are talking about the benefits of early childhood education, but they bemoan the lack of money... a few less nuclear bombs might help. How much intimidation must we employ to get our way?

Christianity's message is so beautiful... Islam's is so realistic.

All these high tech weapons would bother me less if they were used only for defense, but they are used so often for offense, preemption and *false* defense that it makes me ill.

You accuse me of not being able to make up my mind what side I'm on... I say, I have made up my mind... I'm not on *either* one of your "sides." As much as possible, I'd like to be independent, neutral and free of both of your infernal "sides."

You will never be able to make America an impermeable fortress, but if others love and respect you instead of hate and fear you, you may be safer.

I admit unabashedly that I'm not as "patriotic" as you are... I see countries that don't engage in so much aggression, hegemony or manifest destiny at the expense of others and I like that approach.

The sad truth is that if you don't keep up with defense technology, you are likely to be smashed by those that do... and we are "those that do." We have been sharks almost as often as we have been noble protectors of liberty. If you visit places where you are welcome, your life will be more peaceful and eventually those who are not welcoming you may change their minds about you. If you impose yourself on others, they are less likely to welcome you to their countries. *You* may be convinced that *they* need you, but there is much work to do in your own land and that may turn out to be the work that makes you a light to other nations. If you try to lift too heavy a weight, you are likely to hurt your back and crush someones toes as well.

The fact that the US has invaded and occupied Iraq, makes me think that the great forces of the west have as usual directed our foreign policy. George Washington warned us against such adventures, but such sage advice has long since been relegated to the dust bin. The great forces are; corporations, financiers the church

and synagogue. Meanwhile we decry the Jihadis for attempting to reinstate a grand Caliphate from Spain to Indonesia. I don't see this as much of a possibility... it's probably less likely than the west destroying the entire Muslim world, but constantly raising the issue is a good way for you to rally the troops. In any case, I see the rise of Islamic fundamentalism as a violent reaction to this fourth crusade. The latest crusaders are primarily American, as this is where the descendents of the war making Celts, Vikings, Normans and other "barbarians" settled. The less aggressive Norsemen stayed home... while their berserkers have colonized the world.

As far as I'm concerned, for now on, GW is mad King George and his followers are Tories.

Yes, defense is necessary, but it would be less so if people weren't so fond of pursuing their agenda with spears, arrows, bullets and bombs, instead of sage words and good deed. Our fearless leaders look at war mathematically, if the probability of a profitable rate of return is "positive", then you attack, Our boys are quite happy to drink, smoke, don their armor and kill the heathens... after all, you've taught them they are doing God's work. I still think the soldier who beats his sword or rifle into a plowshare is the noblest warrior of all.

A world without a super power would be more just... as it is, with one super power, whatever it says goes. This superpower is controlled by an elite, which is primarily interested in perpetuating itself and its agenda, which it considers divinely inspired. A world without a "one world government" would be more diverse and more likely to serve the interests of the people. Even tribes or weak confederations are better than a one world government that believes it has a mandate to "manage" the people of the world. Under such a system of quotas, high rates of taxation and entitlements for the lazy, "we the people" simply become "units" of consumption and production, we have no individual worth, other than what the government actuaries assign us.

Vice President Dick Cheney is a disgrace... he reportedly can shoot down seventy pheasants in an hour, but somehow managed to obtain five military deferments so that he wouldn't have to go to the shooting match in Vietnam. He's no more a "fearless leader" than he is a sportsman, if he was too good to be shot at, he should not be "good enough" to send other peoples kids into harms way. Meanwhile he has made millions as a war profiteer via his former position at Halliburton and his other investments... does he have anything to do with the Carlyle Group I wonder?

The "law of unintended consequences" is a term I'm hearing a lot lately... George Bush is testing it, but learning very little. Our fearless leader's policy of killing the "evil, evil-doers of evil" may not be working... if he and his neocon cronies had their druthers, America might just opt to "kill them all and let God sort them out" as their patron saint recommended. Meanwhile over 100 female soldiers in Iraq claim to have been sexually assaulted by fellow soldiers... not out of proportion to the rest

of the population you say. Yes, and you have a higher chance of being shot in Washington DC than in Iraq... that is, unless you're an Iraqi.

I'm driving my daughter to school after last night's winter storm... there are cars in ditches all over the place, but our system demands that we get these kids to school. They have to be "educated" and they have to be tough... as Arthur Wellesley said, "the battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton" and we subscribe to the same philosophy.

The term "free country" is a relative one. One definition I like, is, the freer the country, the fewer the repercussions for expressing a point of view that is not shared by the government or the majority of the people. Meanwhile... my friends have advised me to keep my mouth shut on various "sensitive" issues and it's probably good advice!

When the personal risk associated with exercising freedom of speech becomes great, then it's questionable that you truly have that right. As far as I'm concerned, that point is not very far away.

In Afghanistan a man named Abdul Rashad was facing the death penalty for converting to Christianity, but he was later let off the hook. Our "friendly" Afghan government declared him incompetent to stand trial and said he might not even be a real Afghan. A few things come to mind... first the barbarity of a culture that would execute a person for changing their religion; second, the interesting way in which the Afghan government extracted itself from this dilemma and avoided further embarrassment; third, the irony that we are propping up a government that would even consider such an act and finally was Abdul Rashad acting entirely on his own, or was he being encouraged to go public by our own fundamentalist?

Resolving the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians would likely require; supernatural intervention, superhuman effort or super violence... unfortunately, the latter seems the most likely direction we'll eventually embark on.

Tribalism, democracy, the New World Order... they all seem to be forms and degrees of feudalism or serfdom. When half or more of your earnings go to the government so they can make war or pay people to be unproductive, the system needs to be revamped. When the law allows others to take everything you have worked for, than what good is the "system?" Under a single superpower system, there is nothing capable of holding that country in check. It's great for the elite of that nation, but not for the rest of the world. We supposedly spend more than the next twenty countries combined, on our military each year... how can other nations stand up to us? No system is perfect, but I think the single superpower system is intolerable.

If it's true that Dick Cheney shot down seventy pheasants in one hour, I wonder how many were released in that hour? How many were winged or crippled? Unless

he's an extraordinary shot, they must have had to release hundreds of birds. I am a supporter of the right to hunt, but I find his hunting performance, like his statesmanship disgusting. He's just a rich bastard who thinks shooting fish in a barrel is fair sport... and a draft dodger who sends other peoples' kids out to kill and be killed.

Some two hundred years ago, our forefathers rebelled against the king, but you have been taught to accept these injustices and eventually you may accept even worse.

There are different ways of solving countries problems, we can invade like we did in Iraq and Afghanistan and end up with egg on our faces when we find out that we're propping up regimes that want to execute people for converting to Christianity. Meanwhile, we're having little if any success after destroying billions of dollars worth of property. We can also debate the issue of immigration ad infinitum while millions of illegal aliens walk across our border... maybe we should be invading the countries to the south of us, surely we can solve their problems for them!

Does being a loyal American mean being loyal to the current president's view of the world and his definition of what a loyal American is? If it does, then by "your" definition many of us are traitors.

Bush "allegedly" suggested to his buddy Tony Blair, the possibility of painting US spy planes in UN colors in hopes that Iraqi gunners would fire on them and provide a pretense to attack Iraq. Now we have 14 bases in Iraq that appear to be permanent... hmmm. If Bush and Cheney aren't lying sacks of shit and if the democrats aren't spineless, complicit bastards, then I'm the Queen of England. What's wrong with; paying for oil on the open market, working hard to reduce our energy consumption and letting the people over there fight it out if they want to. In the seventies, Afghan women were treated better than they are now. We armed the Jihadis to confound the Russians and now the Jihadis are fighting us. They might even be getting some help from the Russians or from others that we have angered over all the years, with our meddling. Will we allow other countries to make their own history, or as the world police, will *we* make everyone's history?

George Bush is a religious fanatic and he will not deviate from the path he believes God has ordained for him... God help the rest of us! What would be better for us - a major purge, or do we just want "law and order" and security. Since we are unwilling to tweak the system in a positive direction, we may be setting ourselves up for a dictatorship and all that comes with it. We have discarded many of the good things our country was founded on and we are adapting many of the things our ancestors fought to free themselves from. Along the way we have done some very good things and some very bad things.

I read that Iraqi Christians are now fleeing to Syria? How true is that... and if the coalition is not making them feel secure, why would they go to Syria... isn't that

another country on our “evil” list. I keep hearing US generals saying there is no civil war... but why would the Christians be leaving for another Bathist country unless they felt insecure under the current American leaning Iraqi regime? Funny... you don’t see the Iraqi Christians going to our friend Saudi Arabia... I wonder what kind of reception they would get from the Saudi government?

You have convinced the American people to shed much foreign blood, a bit of their own and spend to the national treasure to secure your agenda... you’ve been wildly effective and that’s a damn shame.

Carl Levin, Wolf Blitzer, Bill Krystal or any of the numerous other lobbyists for the Neocons, should be scrupulous enough to disclose their religious or other biases... even Pat Robertson does that much. I should too and think I’ve made clear that as an Arab American, I have a bias. They conveniently point out that we are a “non-sectarian” country -- so no one has to proclaim their agenda or where their true loyalty lies. The problem is, we are acting like a very “sectarian” nation and our foreign policy demonstrates that fact. The “powers that be” simply have nothing to gain by, and perhaps something to loose if they admit to their ideological, religious and Zionist preferences... heck, they won’t so much as allow an unbiased examination these subjects.

Some of the angst and unhappiness that America is try to smother with conspicuous consumption and organized religion may be rooted in the fact that many of us are uncomfortable with the role of world police state and the death and destruction we wreak on others. No matter what rhetoric or nonsense you cloak these actions in, we are killing innocent people with the bombs that only real monsters deserve.

There are always those who will try to take advantage of or abuse you in one way or another. You can’t always stop them, but most of the time, you can slow them down or make their oppression more difficult...

We hope for peace and justice, and as they say, you can’t have one without the other. We are likely to reap what we have sown... but *hopefully* the forces of moderation on both sides will prevail.

Some say trust in God and others say trust in God and keep your powder dry... the former claims the latter is un-necessary if you abide by their slogan.

Karen Hughes might as well be called the minister of propaganda, although she’d be competing for that title with Condi and others. Funny how the people who are saying that America is always right and saving the world, are the same one’s claiming there is only one “true” religion, one best college team etc. One of the last things I heard was her attempt to use soccer diplomacy during the world cup to garner support for US policies.

Let’s just invade Mexico and solve their problems, then they wouldn’t enter our

country illegally in these huge numbers. After all, we're solving Iraq's problems aren't we? On the other hand, we're missing half the equation that equals cause to invade... religion. So for the time being, Mexico is invading the US and the rich get richer on account of it. If we give the illegals amnesty they've just come over in greater numbers... isn't that what's happened since Reagan gave them amnesty in 1986?

If we've been at odds for a hundred thousand years, is it surprising that we're still a bit at odds? The only surprise is the relative lack of progress we've made... that is the sad part of it.

Israel decided to withhold \$ 60 million per month of customs revenue that the Palestinians generate... how nice! The Jewish people have made huge contributions to humanity, but the attitude that they are chosen over the rest of humanity and (by implication) are entitled to lord over others will forever keep them at odds with free thinkers the world over.

I got my hair cut while in Florida and waited in line for quite a while. In front of me was a handsome young marine, with whom the stylist spent a lot of time spoke very nicely to. He didn't tip her at all... and my internal complaint department went into action. As long as your willing to defend our damsels, you don't have to tip them... my take as usual will be seen as cynical, but I see it as killing for them... I fully expected to get a lousy hair cut and was already debating with myself about leaving a tip at all. It turned out that the stylist was very nice and spent as much time with me as she had with the marine. I was quite satisfied with what she was able to do with what's left of my hair. I gave her a decent tip, but didn't change my mind about the other things... I still have more respect for soldiers who will beat their swords into plow shears than for those who kill for glory, freedom or anything else they choose to cloak it in.

I think that two highly mistreated categories of people are Arab-American men and Arab women... both are abused by their societies. Arab women who come to the west can benefit from the rights that western women have won, so they might do better than their sisters back home, as long as they assimilate... if they don't, then they are likely to be treated with suspicion here for wearing the head scarf and being "weird."

I see a lot of women with the pink ribbons on their cars, that means they support a cure for breast cancer. Sometimes those ribbons are next to the yellow ribbons that represent support for our troops in Iraq. I don't blame them for supporting the troops, but I wonder if they support the war too... I think a lot of them do... although the number may be decreasing. I wonder what do they support more, spending money to cure breast cancer, or spending money to "liberate" Iraq, via bombs and bullets?

I am for nothing more or less than everyone having the freedom to associate or

disassociate with whomever they want to. In fact I want to associate with people of all races, nationalities and religions, I just want to do it on a voluntary basis and not be compelled by the “democratic process”, the media, the government or anyone else to do it as per their terms. I suppose however that if the country has decided that’s not how it’s going to be, then I hope to at least have the right to vote with my feet and find a more suitable place to live... if there is one.

The US is like a great big happy dog tethered to a mean little dog... we go where it leads and we do what it wants us to. We do a lot of damage in the neighborhood, so eventually the dog catcher will “put us away.” The Brits are a third dog following close behind catching plenty of scraps and keeping just far enough away from us that the dog catcher might miss them.

The US is the most militaristic country of the last 500 years, it was founded on; invasion, occupation, genocide, slavery and expansionism. It is not so vicious short term as some rouge nations have been, but when viewed over time, in some respects, it has quite a sordid record!

Rum-dumb is being attacked by prominent generals and even being asked to step down for the good of the country. I think he’s an SOB and career criminal... he’s been up to no good from his early days of lobbying for artificial sweetener manufacturers, right up to his days of lobbying for war. On the other hand, the devil we know may be better than whoever the chimp has in the batter’s box. I suppose the more lame ducks we have in this deranged administration the better off the world will be. Meanwhile architects of murder such as; Wolfowitz, Perle, Krystal, Podhoretz, Abrams, Pipes, Cheney, Robertson and dozens of others should be tried as the war criminals they are. These chicken-hawk, draft-dodging zealots and profiteers have expertly and advertently convinced many of the good folks I know to mechanically parrot phrases like “we just need to kill more of them”

“A true patriot is someone who maintains a lovers quarrel with his country... A few nations have delegated to themselves the right to build, own and threaten to use nuclear weapons, while policing the world around them against their production. Nuclear apartheid will not succeed any more than racial apartheid”... Reverend William Sloane Coffin Jr.

Last Sunday we went to the Easter service at a friends church... as usual I couldn’t contain myself and had to write down some thoughts during the service. Now I can’t find the paper, so where do I begin? The slick smooth talking pastor played to his audience as most religious demagogues, I mean leaders do and I couldn’t help but picture him with a mullet haircut and a beer. In this town, we see lots of mullets and beers and when push comes to shove these Joe six packers are likely to fall in line and heed the master’s... I mean pastors call. This cleric is not as belligerent as some mullahs, but his subtle and carefully crafted message is just as blood thirsty in the final analysis. Like them, he is all about power, control, conquest and dominion, despite the sweet psychology and appealing arguments about eternal life and saving

souls.

Just as Jean-Paul Marat and his fellow Jacobins during the French Revolution kept recommending cutting off more heads to solve the nascent republics problems, our neocon masters suggest killing more “bad guys” to solve ours.

Crude oil hit a twenty five year high adjusted for inflation yesterday and crossed the \$ 75 per barrel mark for the first time in history. Bush would most likely invade Iran forthright, to draw attention away from gasoline prices, get his their hands on more oil and “liberate” the Iranians... if only his adventure in Iraq was going a bit better. They may very well attack Iran anyway and many Americans would be pleased at the diversion, some would even like to see their mighty uncle turn that country into a sea of glass.

In his 9.11 fifth year anniversary speeches, Shrub mentioned that he senses a third “awakening” beginning in the USA... God help us if we awaken anymore along his line of thought.

The GOP pollster on Fox - the “fair and balanced network”, replied to the commentators concern that Bush’s 33% approval rating was cause for alarm, by pointing out that at one point Harry Truman’s favorable rating was only 23% and he said Truman is now considered one of our greatest presidents. What does it say for us if we consider the man who gave the command to nuke hundreds of thousands of civilians one of our greatest presidents? This, in light of increasing evidence that Japan was already trying to sue for peace and our main reason for incinerating the inhabitants of two major Japanese cities was to frighten the soviets...

The message of Christianity is so beautiful and the message of Islam is so realistic. Islam seems to be a reaction to the failure of people to adhere to the tenants of new Testament Christianity, as well as a progression beyond the pagan religious practices that still hung on in the Arabian peninsula in the seventh century. Islam offered practical approaches to the problems and challenges that the Arabs faced during that period of history. Christianity and Judaism were food for thought, but since the Arabs were in competition with Christians and Jews, those religions may have seemed to them as usurpers. The Arabs also must have noticed that the Christians often didn’t practice what the preached, so it’s no surprise that they fleshed out their own religion. In the final - or at least current analysis, Islam seems to work no better than Christianity and Judaism.

I am grateful for the right to criticize our religious and political leaders, although I believe there are sanctions against protesting to loudly... even here. If I were in any number of Islamic countries, I would probably be to fearful to protest... It is the wall of separation between church and state in the west that allows us to have freedom of speech... God preserve it! In the Islamic world that wall in weak or

almost non-existent in some cases, that makes freedom of speech a scarce commodity... not that I consider western religious leaders to have nurtured freedom of speech, except in cases where it benefited them. For the most part they have been obstacles and impediments to freedom of speech. To this day the fundamentalist churches would most likely control the press and promote burning the words if not the flesh of whoever they deem a heretic, just as they did to the Gnostics and the “enlightened” during their numerous inquisitions and witch hunts.

Mr. Lewis from Princeton, you mix lies with the truth to write history in a light favorable to your agenda and cause. Many “great” demagogues would be proud; Hitler, Stalin, Moa, Mussolini, Goebels and Churchill come to mind... you’re from the same mold.

The United Nations partitioning of Palestine leading to the “establishment” of the state of Israel, is a prime example of tyranny of the majority and powerful over a weaker minority. The Christian nations, lobbied by Neocon money and representing two billion Christians, versus a smaller number of Muslims pushed through the mandate that led to the theft of the Palestine from the native Arab people.

Former Fox News host Tony Snow has been named as Chimps new press secretary... to me, that’s evidence of just how fair and balanced Fox New *really* is. The pundit said that Snow will be like a CEO coming into a sinking ship... I see him as a new assistant Minister of Propaganda - and having learned his trade at Fox and other muckraking assignments, he’s a well qualified minister indeed.

George Washington said avoid foreign alliances... I know he was an imperfect man, he made a lot of mistakes, he owned slaves and I think he violently oppressed Indians. He was also one of the very few founding fathers who ever freed his slaves, albeit after his death.

I have spent very little time in the old country and believe my connection is as much as anything in my blood and in my bones... I call it bone memory. There are thoughts, memories and emotions that I can’t account for... a shrink would likely tell me they are fabrications of my imagination... unless he thought he could help me or make a buck by telling me they are real.

If we do “what’s best for America”, we sometimes end up screwing people in other countries... don’t we realize the long term harm in that? These old chicken hawks and war mongers are going to try to talk you into, or draft you into fighting people all around the world... let’s let *them* go! Better yet, let’s try to solve these problems peacefully. One things certain, there will be lots of pressure to make war, because *your* leaders will be largely by those who have been won over and sanctified by the ideological arguments and promises of glory of the chicken hawks... why not influence people via Christian charity, instead of by crusader bombs?

Chapter Seven

Journalist Thorn? (Lorne?) Anderson has written a book called Unembedded. He says that before the US forces went into Najaf, all journalists were ordered out of the entire province, that was when he decided he needed to go in.

Why should I be patriotic and supportive of this “occupied” government? Didn’t US Grant try to get certain speculators kicked out of the south, via an executive order? Instead he got in trouble and had to rescind his order. I suppose the “speculators” continued their war profiteering unhindered. When push comes to shove, where do people’s loyalties lie? The anchorman directing news and analysis from the situation room at CNN, reportedly has used the name Ze’ev Barak, one when penning articles in his other “favorite country”, he’s a clever foreign asset if I’ve ever seen one.

The soldiers father said the Kansas church protesters who say American soldiers are dying because we are nice to gays are spreading hate and hiding behind the first amendment. I wonder if he’s sympathetic to gays, or just angry that these people are protesting at his sons funeral. I don’t blame him for being angry, I would be livid, but I’m not sure the first amendment is something you can hide behind. That doesn’t mean I would blame the people they are so cruelly offending for kicking their asses...

The latest “poll” showed that a large majority of Americans can’t find; Iraq, Ohio, Afghanistan or Louisiana on a map... are we a nation of intelligent people or simply goyum?

American Madrases? I submit that we have thousands of them, be they fundamentalist religious schools or home schools, the messages are similar. Evolution is bad, all other religions are damned, etc., etc.

Zacarias Moussaoui received life in prison today and the family’s of the 9/11 victims had mixed reactions. Some wanted the death penalty and revenge, while others were okay with the life sentence. Some just wanted to know how these terrorists could be so viscous and cruel... why did they want to hurt Americans? I guess we’ll never understand the Arab’s anger at having Palestine and other Arab lands invaded and occupied. I guess we have conquered so many people that a lot of Americans take it for granted that it is our right to subjugate and dominate others...

Moussaoui yelled “America you lost” as he was led away and one of the 9/11 victims

relatives said he Moussaoui won. He said America had won, because this “would be” terrorist had his day in a court of law, a jury of Americans had found him guilty as charged, spared his life and sentenced him to life in prison. I agree this makes a good statement for American justice, if he was really what they say he was... and if he was, maybe he should have received the death sentence, or would that be the easy way out?

How many members of the American Bar Association, the ACLU, congress, the media, Wall Street and industry have contributed money and materials to Israel? I submit that a lot of them have ... so where do these influential peoples loyalty lie?

The Israelis are usually credited with winning the war of 1948 by more or less miraculous means, but I wonder if this is true? Were they that poorly armed and led, or did they fully expect to have to use their military to hold on to what they had bought from the United Nations? Did they not have tanks and planes? Did they have no military intelligence? Did they really win with outdated small arms and the power of God as we are led to believe... or did the Arabs have the outdated weapons?

Race, religion, ethnicity... yes, I take them into consideration although I’m informed that to do so is a bad thing. Meanwhile, I notice you doing the same, just not admitting it, or somehow not being conscious of that fact. It’s not pc to be frank about such things and not necessary to be honest about it, as long as your espousing the party line. It is so ingrained into American culture to be pro Israeli and anti Arab that it need not be expressed, acknowledged or confronted... les jeux sont fait.

Tolerance, reconciliation, compromise and negotiation are fine things... coercion, duress, subjugation, capitulation and surrender are quite different, quite distinct and incompatible with the formers.

Maybe Arabs and Scandinavians are melancholy because they live in harsh environments... opposite environments, but harsh none the less. I can’t speak for anyone else, but extreme highs and lows occur both in the environments and in our souls.

It’s likely that everyone on the face of the earth has been a “beneficiary” in one way or another from stolen or conquered land. Does that mean the Palestinians or Indians and others have no right to complain and resist occupation? Practically every square foot of decent land on the planet has been the subject of conflict. People have been displaced, or murdered by those who were stronger. Does this mean that we should accept the current lines of demarcation and only resist peacefully? I can’t answer that for anyone but myself... at least not very convincingly.

I’m not for polygamy and I am for equal rights for women, but I question whether we should be half way around the world righting these wrongs. Maybe we should,

certainly in a few cases yes, but if it weren't for their oil, we'd probably be leaving the Arabs alone. If someone wants two spouses and if all involved are over 18, or over 21, and entering into it freely, then how's that worse than having five spouses over the course of ones life? It seems to be largely religious conventions that come to bear in all this, but unless there are minors involved, why not leave it up to the individuals?

Was the May 8 2006 letter from President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran to President Bush

a diplomatic opening or a diversionary tactic... to give them more time to work on their nuclear program. Maybe it's a little of both, regardless the battle lines are drawn as usual, exactly where you'd expect them to be.

Any walls constructed on the borders will serve two purposes, keeping people out and keeping people in and the choice is unlikely to be ours. General Hayden who our president has nominated as the new CIA chief, would dove-tail nicely into any new apparatus for further controlling the common person's actions. When the chickens eventually come home to roost, any jingoes who fall into their domestic surveillance net will be in for a surprise.

My father probably picked a good time to leave the old country... what about me? Will I be here for the duration or will I have to move along?

In the news today, (5/10/06) a US Senator says legislation may pass to make China play fair. These kinds of reports remind me how much the US is like Rome and of what happened to Rome. We think that our "superior military" allows us to compel anyone anywhere to conform to our view of things. We like to think we play fair, but do we? How can we be right all the time, and how can we expect others to submit to our will every time.

Washington and London have cut off aid to the Palestinians, because the democratically elected Hamas government is a "terrorist" organization... meanwhile it's the Palestinian people who suffer. George, Tony and friends say they were reluctant to cut off aid, but they have to unless the Palestinians agreed to recognize Israel. I guess that means the Palestinians will not subjugate themselves to the west and they will not stop being "terrorists." Some of the Palestinians see suicide bombings as legitimate resistance, but to most Westerners legitimate resistance is when you meet them on a field of battle, where the west's war machine can annihilate all opposition.

Speaking of terrorism... what was it when hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians were nuked in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? "That" you say was a declared war, so murdering civilians was justified... well please take your declaration of war and stick it up your ass. Your conventions of war make mechanized murder no better than any other murderous rampage designed to get ones way, no matter what the consequences are to others. You have perfected mass murder as well, or better

when you consider your experience with nukes, than any rogue regime in history. You have virtually exterminate the entire population of North America... I haven't seen many native Americans east of the Mississippi in years, and west of it they are also but a small minority.

On the news they're showing the latest body armor for our soldiers... they are basically bomb squad suits and although cumbersome, they will save many lives. The "alternative" the retired military man says, is remote controlled machine guns and cannons on top of heavily armored troop carriers. In either case, American's intend to kill as many Arabs as is necessary to subjugate them... the trick is to do so with as little American blood spilled as possible. I agree it's a great thing to reduce American casualties to the absolute minimum, but invading a country under false pretenses and killing thousands of people should not be tolerated by Americans. As usual however, the American people seem quite disinterested in addressing root causes or even considering that there are any root causes other than those that certain of our leaders proclaim.

The president of Iran is again calling Israel a tyrannical regime... interestingly, whether or not you believe that seems to depend on if you're a Muslim, Christian or a Jew.

Didn't Rome have certain democratic institutions? That didn't make them a just nation -- they were one of the most oppressive nations in history, killing millions of people over the centuries.

The certainty of final war in the Middle East is being preached by the home school educators and the private madrasses that have become popular throughout America, especially in the "heartland." Just as an addicts addiction to crack must run it's course and there's still no guarantee he or she will survive it, a countries addiction to grandiosity and hubris must run it's course and there's no guarantees of it's survival either. If you are so determined to save the patient that you're willing to kill him in the process, then you are not a doctor you are a mad scientist.

The weakness that small nations and tribes have is that even when they band together against the "empires", they are at a disadvantage -- vis-à-vis, the empires superior; war machines, logistics and communication system. Be it Rome, Russia, Britain or the USA, empires thrive for a while, sometimes for centuries, but eventually they tend to rot and fall apart.

When I say I can feel it in my bones, I mean it's like when someone refers to having a feeling in their gut.

Church, mosque, temple? When they stop promoting murder, I may reconsider going to their hallowed halls... not that they care

If your brother offends you -- do you strike him down? If your sister transgresses,

do you blow up her house? Then why are you so keen on forcibly "correcting" the stranger who lives a thousand miles away? Do you think you are immune to the laws of nature... do you think you will never reap what you have sown, or are you just doing Gods work? It seems like you always realize a material benefit from your adventures and you manipulate international law to make it "legal." This goes for both sides -- whether it's the West or the Muslim world... it's mostly about; oil, religion and big bucks. If it your goal was humanitarian, and for straightening straightening things out -- you might be invading Mexico to solve their problems.

Leonardo De Vinci called himself "a disciple of experience" he was a great questioner, not a great believer... need I say more in terms of describing the opposite of my compatriots?

Maybe you're right, this war machine has been developed to destroy rogue regimes. Maybe you're right, maybe you're wrong. I guess it has to pay for itself somehow, maybe that's why it seems so profit oriented and in the pocket of big business.

I've noticed that indecision -- especially intelligent indecision is not respected by most cultures. We are instead strongly encouraged to decide to join a party, takes sides and support divisiveness.

George W. Bush has said, "you're either with us or against us" and reportedly he's said things like; "in Texas we don't do nuance" and "I don't do nuance." Some people think that their's is the only truth -- it's their way or the highway. Everyone, everywhere must live according to these certain dictates, or else. That is unless you have "might", especially in the form of nukes ..., then perhaps they'll talk to you and maybe even "do nuance." Obviously, I am not a Bush fan -- I see him as wanting to be sheriff of the world. I would even call him a criminal, although that's a stupid thing to say around these parts. I wonder if the reports about his loud outbursts of obscenities directed at those he is angry with are true? On the one hand he seems like a likeable enough fellow, but is he really a ideological zealot and dry drunk -- the worst kind there is.

Bush talks endlessly about stopping terrorism, but is he sincere and just, or simply the front man for powerful special interest groups? He quite rightly criticizes terrorists for killing innocent people, but avoids mentioning the death of hundreds of thousands of civilians in seconds in Hiroshima and Nagasaki... or of tens of thousands in Iraq and Afghanistan under his watch. Terrorism, is nothing more or less than a vile and sickening tactic that desperate people use against rich, well equipped armies.

There are things worth fighting for - more than one way to resist and my way may be different than yours. The time, place and things one might sacrifice their life for is different for everyone.

What form of government is best? Is it our current form of democracy as most

Americans claim? I'm not sure our form of democracy guarantees individual rights better than a "benevolent despot" would? I've heard it's prophesized that Jesus will come back to rule and then there will be one and only one king. I'm guessing he'd be just, fair and firm, which if it materializes sounds pretty good. Meanwhile, people are ruled by presidents, chiefs and warlords... many of whom are fomenting self-serving conflict. Hopefully with a single "just King", things would be more peaceful. I'm just not sure the guys who claim to be paving the way for the "millennial kingdom" are as well intentioned as they claim to be.

In December 9, 2004, Sergeant Johnny M. Horn pleaded guilty to killing a severely injured 16 year old Iraqi boy. Sergeant Horn's defense was the "existence of mitigating circumstances", that is, he was putting the boy out of his misery. That may or may not be true, but I wonder if Sergeant Horn would like the same solution applied to him or severely wounded American soldiers? Would he want to be summarily shot to end his misery, or would he prefer having medical assistance called in. They say that 90% of America's wounded in Iraq survive their injuries... that's up from approximately 75% during the Vietnam war.

I believe the war in Iraq is promoted by adults of "principle" and fought by impressionable young people who are constantly being groomed to fill the ranks of those adults. I am a little hesitant to call the western coalition a crusader army, but there are many in the Middle East who would. I would however characterize the US military as being made up of several groups; working class soldiers partly in it for a steady job, more affluent youths who are in it because of nationalistic, or religious ideology and others who are somewhere in between. Uniting these soldiers is the desire for justice or revenge for the 9.11 attacks, which is a natural rallying call to arms. The underlying problems and the Muslims' complaints about foreign occupation of the Middle East have always been swept under the rug by most Americans. Religious ideology and our thirst for oil have made such issues virtually irrelevant to most Americans... .. and calling oneself a patriot and those who disagree with your agenda "America haters" make it quite difficult to logically discuss the root problems.

Our government is right to call the Arabs out, for their barbarism, but are we right to invade and kill thousands of non-combatants to make them reform. Did we not sell them billions worth of weapons and the chemicals used to make WMDs? Is there not a better way to handle international affairs than to foment conflict in order to achieve what seems good for us?

I've seen how the pastor looks when he wins and when he loses. When he coached, I saw which kids he kept on the bench and which kids he put on the field. Is this how Jesus would coach? On a number of occasions, the pastor seemed to be all about winning, be it souls or ball games. Is it really all about power, dominion, glory, victory and control? Is it primarily about imperial splendor, be it in ancient Rome or in Washington DC... or is it be about Christ's more peaceful messages?

The wounded soldiers coming back from Iraq with amputated arms and legs seem to be at least as gung ho as the other troops. Maybe they want revenge on Iraqis, maybe they don't want it to seem that they were injured for nothing... or maybe they simply want the mission of liberty and progress for Iraq to succeed. .. that's what a lot of them say anyway.

The Aztecs are accused of marching their prisoners to the top of pyramids where priests cut the victims beating hearts out with razor sharp obsidian knives. The Spanish largely destroyed the Aztec civilization and that may have been the price the Aztecs paid for practicing human sacrifice. I don't know a great deal about the cultures of other new world natives such as the; Incas, Sioux, Cherokee and others, or of the African slaves' culture, but I doubt they deserved the treatment they received from the Europeans and Americans. Now, the Arabs, are finding out that the descendents of the European and American conquistadors are still intent on conversion or conquest.

We outsource the manufacture of our socks and underwear to "the developing world", where labor is cheap. We outsource the torture of our prisoners to some of the same countries, where life is cheap. We wear clothes made by exploited people and we obtain information from tortured people. It's implied that both are necessary evils... the cost of doing business in the brave new world. I think the means and the ends are wrong and cheap in both cases.

My friend pointed out that the Tsunami had primarily hit non-Christian nations, it was an obvious observation, one which must have occurred to many people. Some may have found some satisfaction in that realization, I doubt that my friend is of that ilk. I mentioned hearing a report that a Christian fishing village had also been decimated and that certainly many Christians had died as well. He countered with something about inevitability and that the fact remained that non-Christian nations had suffered the worst. I wondered out loud if the Christians who died were "bad Christians", or was the God of the Bible unable to make a "surgical" strike that would only take out "heathens"... heck even the air force claims to have that ability.

The US was criticized for pledging too little for tsunami relief, then it pledged a little more and a week later came to the plate more generously, offering \$350 million. Then they were trumped by Japan's pledge of \$ 500 million and it makes you wonder... is this a bidding war? Meanwhile the Arab nations have been fairly quiet, with most of them pledging very little, at least as far as I know. Of course one of the richest Arab nations is currently being taken apart piece by piece, via the USA's expenditure of hundred billion to "liberate" it.

Alberto Gonzalez was nominated and confirmed as the next attorney general by GWB, early in 2005. He's been accused of recommending a departure from the Geneva convention and of approving the use of torture in the war on terror. I think torture is wrong, but I think there are times when it would be difficult for people

not to use it – such as the terrorist who knows where the nuke is scenario... but I wonder if it is effective? I imagine that if a loved one was in danger and I thought that torturing someone with valuable information might save them, or if I were a public official trying to prevent a terrorist attack, I would be inclined to authorize any means available to obtain information. Wouldn't it be nice however, if we could somehow avoid getting into such predicaments.

The following quote is attributed to Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez, "when the pain is physical, it must be of an intensity akin to that which accompanies serious physical injury such as death or organ failure. Severe mental pain requires suffering not just at the moment of infliction but it also requires lasting psychological harm." In other words, he has a relatively high tolerance for the use of torture, though not nearly as high as some even worse barbarians... I wonder how he'd feel if he were the one being tortured.

The "torture debate" goes to show that we will do damn near anything to get our way ... and so will they. I wonder if our wonderful way of life, is so superior after all? Just as there is a debate over here about torture, there have surely been debates about it in most countries that employ it. I guess in the countries that employ torture... the brutes won the debate, although not necessarily by virtue of superior arguments. We can "be proud", that at least our debate is open and not merely between dictators and their advisors... but is that good enough? When was the last time that Sweden, Switzerland, Australia or Germany and Japan (yes Germany and Japan) authorized torture or extreme rendition? Not that long ago for some of them, but still less recently than us.

Human government is imperfect, whether it's democracy or any other form... although democracy - flawed as it is, still has great potential. Democracies "problem" is that the people, tend to vote for excessive benefits for themselves, undermining the financial foundation of the society. The rich use their money and influence to lobby the congress to vote for their interests and average people can eventually become subjects of the government... not citizens of a nation.

I mean to tell my Son, there are fights enough in life without picking them ... be peaceful. There are saints and mad dogs among all groups of people, it the worst when the "saints" and mad dogs are one and the same.

I tend to think religions all have cult like qualities, they all try to brainwash people, be they Moonies, Muslims, Christians or Jews. Most are based on personality cults and all do some good and some bad.

Whether it's a despondent mother drowning her children, suicide bombers killing innocent civilians, or sky pilots raining death on the inhabitants of a city, they are all sick and misguided people.

On January 8, 2005, The US apologized for the loss of “possibly innocent lives” after dropping a 500 lb. bomb on the wrong house... can you imagine, do you have any idea what a 500 lb. bomb would do to your house? Do you even care about what it did to that Iraqi house?

Your cries of self defense and necessary pre-emption sound empty, cruel and feeble to my ears. When you say, “such is war, unfortunately some innocents die”, I say, war is wrong and these terrible examples prove it. All of your officially sanctioned snipers, bombers and generals are an affront and utter disgrace to everything sacred and holy. Will you ever pound your swords into plough shears as your books instruct you to? Do you really expect to enter the houses of the holy with so much blood on your hands!

You claim to be interested in liberating foreign nations, but it would hold more water if there wasn't always a pot of gold, or oil at the end of the rainbow. I was taught that fighting is wrong and I believe it is, but as I later learned, the best offense is a good defense, so young people would do well to learn self defense.

Peace is the worthiest goal and justice will go along way towards bringing it to fruition... can we please get started?

Foreign policy and behavior towards people of other cultures and countries? How about respect, encouragement and non-interference, except to stop murder and genocide... including that committed by the good ole boys...

Blowing up people on buses is wrong and so is stealing land, villages and countries. Two wrongs do not make a right, no matter how holy or righteous each side thinks it is.

Maybe when the “good guys” invade, liberate, take over and carry away a countries wealth, it is just God's version of; affirmative action, social engineering, wealth redistribution, retribution or justice. I find all *that* hard to believe though and have never actually heard the politicians explain it that way - but they sure act like it's true. It's kind of like the idea that God sent the Indian Ocean Tsunami to punish the heathens. I'm skeptical of that just as I'm skeptical of the above, but if God works in this way, he certainly doesn't need anyone's approval or understanding. That doesn't and wouldn't reduce my skepticism and horror, because my limited imagination and understanding can not comprehend such a mysterious *modus operandi*.

Chapter Eight

On January 1, 2005 I saw a report where Condi Rice told Barbara Boxer that she doesn't take the truth lightly and it made me think of a couple things. Wasn't it Pontius Pilate who in the Bible asked "what is truth?" and haven't many throughout history asked that question. It makes me think that almost everyone takes the truth seriously, at least when their interests are at stake, and each of us tends to have a different version of the truth... guess who's is always right!

If you turn the other cheek and use non-violent means of protest, you may win many converts, especially in the long run. You also may not be around to benefit from any justice or advantage gained by such a noble approach, but others might and they *may* even thank you for your sacrifice.

Our president Mr. G.W. Bush... that great Christian leader, does not seem to be a proponent of turning the other cheek, in fact he has adapted a pre-emptive strike approach ... will it work?

"When the world becomes more free, the world will become more peaceful"... said GW Bush back on around January 19, 2005. Well that sounds great, but I interpret his words as meaning, when we are done with our conquest of the Middle East, Israel will be more secure and we'll have control of all the oil we want. Okay, that interpretation may be going too far, so how about this - when we subdue our enemies and get our own way, things will be just peachy ... at least for "us."

No doubt there are many governments that need to be "reformed" and a few that need to be crushed, but we seem to be deciding which ones to overthrow, based on religion and oil. In the process of "liberating" Iraq, will we have a successful operation, but a dead patient? Where were we when Rwandans were massacring each others by the hundreds of thousands? In recent years, there were civil wars and thousand killed in Nepal, Sudan, the Congo and a dozen other places, but without oil, religion or other "vital" interests at risk, the west was conspicuously absent from those conflicts. An alternative maxim to GW's could easily be "when the world is more peaceful, it will become more free." This is just as true as GW's which seems at least partially an excuse to attack others... arguably it is leading to less freedom at home and abroad. Just look at the various domestic spying programs and the Patriot Act. Call it whatever you want, but when you violently apply your policies, neither peace or freedom are so likely to flourish.

Who decides what countries we should liberate? Is it the people or is it the oil companies, the military industrial complex, the bankers and the church? Wait a minute, maybe those groups are America... or at least the American's who call the shots.

If you don't like what's going on and feel like you're being railroaded, you have several options. You can accept what's being foisted on you, you may submit, you can negotiate and/or you can resist. If you're weak and have not made careful preparations for your defense, then you can forget about the second set of options... after all, there are societies that have been studying war and steadily increasing their military might for hundreds of years. The system can be "tweaked", to make it better, but there will always be people who will do what they can to control the debate and stymie opposing views. In the name of PC, diversity, or by hijacking terms like "for the children" or "peace and reconciliation", they will do their best to shut you down and close your mouth.

While praising Bush regarding the 2004 inauguration, pundit Alan Bookman said that one great thing about this country is that "protestors have an absolute right to participate in the inauguration." He neglected to mention that due to the war on terrorism and its attendant assault on the Bill of Rights, the protestors were confined to areas carefully selected by the police and we saw only brief glimpses of them on TV, thanks to the corporate media. The same corporations that are paying for the lavish inauguration parties will control how the people see them... if at all. They will pay about \$ 100 million for their parties and for access to the republican "leaders"... the American taxpayers will pay about \$ 200 million for the beefed up security.

The government and its media oligarch cronies have this all figured out. First you announce well in advance that you will confine protestors to relatively remote sites, (but allow a few of them to get close to diffuse criticism), this will discourage all but the most vehement protestors from even making an appearance. Why would house wives, factory workers or seniors who live hundreds of miles away bother to travel to DC, if they realize they won't get even remotely close to the action? The protestors that do show up, are likely to be the "radicals" who are somewhat more dedicated to anti-war, or anti-government causes. These people are then filmed at opportune times and the footage will be edited to show them at their worst... as "wild eyed radicals." What better way for TPTB to further consolidate their control over the masses than to portray those opposing the president as a small band of nuts and crackpots?

America has been at it's best when it has helped keep free people free, as in Europe in WWI and WWII, and in smashing fascist, imperialists powers such as Japan and Germany in WWII... although I think it committed its share of atrocities along the way (Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Dresden.) How history will judge its current role as; world police, oil bully, guarantor of client states like Israel and Taiwan and nation builder in the Middle East will be for posterity to judge.

Just as evolution is the "tweaking" of species, conflict resolution is the tweaking of civilizations. In both cases, the outcome can be beneficial or lead to extinction... especially when we attempt to get our way all the time and routinely use bombs to

achieve the outcome we seek.

I certainly care about the world of the future, but why get overly excited about it? By the time most of these “terrible” things come to pass, I’ll probably have already passed through the intestines of a worm. There will be new generations wrestling with the issues of their times... I wish you all the best! I’m saying this tongue in cheek, my friend... actually I think our greatest responsibility is to work for a peaceful and just world.

In the end, will more people have been tortured and killed by Saddam in his quest for; power and Arab nationalism, or by GWB in his quest for liberation and democracy? I’m guessing that Saddam’s will have tortured and killed more, but only time will tell how many will die as a result of GW’s devious shenanigans. Only today, November 27, 2005, the former interim president of Iraq Allad Allawi said that the new government was abusing the Iraqi people’s civil rights almost as much as Saddam had... of course Allawi didn’t last long after that.

Jesus’ message is great and good, but GW’s doesn’t sound too bad either... at least on the surface. So tell me, what is true, right and Godly? Is GW a great man or a maniac? Time will tell. Is Jesus the risen savior of all mankind? Time will tell... won’t it?

Sunni, Shiite civil war in Iraq? Few things could make TPTB happier, I guess they think that makes for a safer world. As far as they’re concerned, there’s nothing better than chaos in the Muslim world.

WWJB (Who would Jesus bomb?) I don’t know. Who would George Bush Bomb? Well... lots of people it seems - but mostly evil, evil doers of evil. He’s reported to have said that God was directing his actions in the war, but I’m not sure. Even Jesus seems to have been “pragmatic” at times and not always completely idealistic. Didn’t he say something about obeying kings of this world and rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar’s? Were those kings democratic, purveyors of freedom, or were they not often cruel, arbitrary and vicious oppressors of their subjects? Why would he tell his followers to obey them? Why not tell them to rise up against them? Violence can either hasten freedom, or delay it, but in any case it exacts a terrible toll on the innocent.

On the BBC they’re talking about genocide and the commentator asks, could a mass extermination like the Nazi murder of the Jews occur again? They say yes, and point to Darfur, Sudan. I agree and wonder if nuking of civilians, past or future also qualifies? The international lawyers that justify bombing civilians, probably have a “good argument” in their defense, but I don’t buy it. The powerful will use everything in their arsenal to achieve and justify the “national interest.” The destruction of human life will be rationalized by the winners as necessary for the survival of their civilization.

Some members of TPTB, do some very good things, but they are also willing to steal countries outright, or “liberate” them from tyrants. Then they install friendly regimes, willing to sell them oil or other resources at favorable prices. They also sell arms to brutal regimes that are willing to torture prisoners for them, provide cheap labor, or sell them oil. Civil war in Iraq is better per TPTB, than stability - unless the stability is on their terms.

Tyranny evolves, as does democracy. Greece, the “first” democracy, defeated tyrannical rulers in the ancient world and then was itself conquered by Rome, a republic, which ruled much of the ancient world for hundreds of years. In the last 200 years, Britain was a bit like Greece, but it was surpassed by America, which is a lot like the Roman empire. All four were and are imperfect democracies motivated primarily by self-interest and greed. Gladiators and knights have been replaced by “special operations troops” and bomber pilots, but they still break down doors and kill the “enemy”, in order to guarantee “freedom.” The west talks about the prowess and moral superiority of its armed forces, just as the Romans no doubt spoke of their Centurions... some of us are not impressed.

It’s as useless to attempt a rational conversation about some things with a neocon westerner, as it would be to attempt the same with an Al Qaeda member. Both are likely to be so indoctrinated into their cult, so thoroughly brainwashed, that they can not, for the life of them, be truly or even remotely rational. One is likely to be devoted to Jesus and democracy, while the other is devoted to Mohammed and sharia law. Both have many cult like traits. “Elite” members of both religions, are trained to kill on command and honored by their society for that violence. There are different levels of cult brainwashing, mostly reversible, albeit some more easily than others.

What the administration has dreamed up may be fine, it may be wonderful, or it may be a scam. If they eventually achieve their goals of democracy and freedom in the Middle East, then the majority will benefit. Other than Muslim men losing control over their families and property... everything will be fine. It’s possible that a little reform on the part of Muslim men might have prevented the invasion of their lands, but many of them seem to be the “all or nothing” type.

The U.S. in return may win influence, if not control over mid-east oil, which might keep our engines running until we can figure out some new energy source. A “bonus” for the neocon hardliners, is that the weakening of Arab nationalism, could make Israel more “secure”, or at least in firm control of the territory it occupies. Dominating the Muslims also serves as “proof” to many Christians that “their” God “is an awesome God... and reigns supreme” so you’d better not mess with Jesus, Moses, Israel or America for that matter.

Life is a lot like a team sport, there’s pressure on you to join one side or another and you almost have to join if you want to “get ahead.” I mention that because here in America you’re expected to join one of the major religions, how are you major

political parties and root for one of the big football teams.

I'm simply questioning the "fact" that God gave Palestine to Moses and the 10 tribes and all that goes with it. The "powers that be" have a vested interest in perpetuating that idea, after all, it gives them a reason to meddle. The average Joe or Jane is anxious to go along, after all they have been promised everlasting life if they do the heavy lifting.

The arrival of peace and justice, in that order would be great, but I'm guessing you'd have to reverse the order to justice and then peace for it to be achieved.

My son's buddy told us about the apache helicopter hit video that had been on the net for months. He described it to me in slightly ambiguous terms, instead of the standard rah, rah and kill the bastards presentation you'd get from a lot of people. He politely toned it down, since he knew I'm not gung ho like most of our neighbors were at the time. Regardless, the shock and awe of seeing some Iraqi insurgents literally shot to little pieces by the brave sky pilots seemed palpable in his voice.

If you're not strong and democratic, we might just give your country away to the highest bidder, be it the "powers that be" or the corporations. Case in point... Palestine in 1948 was given to the highest bidder, by the UN, Britain and the USA -- but the Arabs have yet to throw in the towel. Meanwhile in Kenya and black South Africa, there are reports, that most of the women have been raped in their lifetimes, many repeatedly. Allegedly, part of the local men's AIDs prevention strategy, is to have sex with virgins... according to some reports, this is also a sad part of the culture in general, I'm told. Why aren't we saving the women there? Oh, that's right... they don't have much oil and Israel's not threatened by their behavior.

Let's not even mention Equatorial Guinea, where the president's reportedly beat their rivals hearts.

We would be doing the world a lot more good, if we didn't support any tyrants, even when we think it's in our national interest. We've supported monsters like Saddam and it's come back to bite us on the behind. Would it not be better to just boycott them, than to sell them arms when they're doing our bidding and bomb them when they don't?

Do you want oil? Then buy it. Do you think the price is too high? Then consume less... it's likely to come down in price if you do.

Most people think that democracy is better for them and for society than any other form of government. I'm not convinced that there's any form of government that's best for society, since I can't think of any that's done a great job of protecting the peoples inalienable rights. Every form of government that I know of, has evolved into a monster of some kind, some much worse than others, but none are evenhanded, or even benign.

It would be nice, to have a government that permanently, irrevocably and constitutionally guarantees the right of all individuals to; life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Of course we'd first have to agree on exactly what that means and even that seems to be impossible! Eventually, I hope the NWO will allow groups of like minded pioneers to colonize the heavens without interference... but there's a slim chance of that happening!

Government and organized religion both sometimes act like criminal enterprises. In order to achieve the leaders goals, they will do any damn thing they please. Both of these institutions may be necessary, and may be better than clans and tribes, but not much better... except when it comes to organizing for war. Fortunately despotic war lords and lone wolfs have little chance against large organized armies, but these armies are never quite the pious liberators they claim to be.

There are several forms of government... most of which proclaim they guarantee every individual the same equal rights. In reality, it doesn't work that way, there is usually tyranny of the majority over others and special high status groups that are more equal than others.

If dictatorships are unacceptable, why have we supported so many of them? Democracies with Presidents and Prime Ministers have great potential, but even these often fail to guarantee individual rights and responsibilities. In our system, is the president not capable of becoming a dictator... at least for four or eight years? I think it's starting to look that way, since under extraordinary conditions, the president can revoke individual rights and invoke all kinds of emergency powers. That's one gosh darn slippery slope!

Iraq has so many religious dimensions. Not just the crusaders versus the Jihadis, but also the Zionist connection and the battle between the Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds. Religion and oil, it's just like in the old days... manifest destiny and competition for control of valuable resources.

Rome wasn't built in a day and it wasn't burnt in a day... these things take time. The US wiped out the Indian tribes with hot lead and smallpox. It is prepared to wipe out the Arab tribes with lead, nukes, germs or anything else it has to resort to... God help them. Meanwhile, the "powers that be" will be safe in their underground bunkers and so will "their" oil.

When something is stolen, the owner will ask for it back, if that doesn't work, he'll go to the law, if the law doesn't back him up, he might smash the transgressor with his own fist... but that doesn't always work, or solve anything.

Regarding Iraq, the neocons will be content with a compliant government or with chaos and civil war, either one is compatible with their strategy to divide and conquer. Once Iraq is pacified or in shambles, they would like to move on to Iran or

Syria or the next “terrorist enemy.”

Many Iraqis felt privileged to vote, who wouldn't after the tyranny of the Saddam regime? Here in America, I'm not excited about our elections and won't be until I see candidates who are more representative of my views... which may never happen. I don't blame the majority for wanting to hold onto power, it is almost never surrendered voluntarily. Meanwhile, I sometimes feel like a serf ... well fed, but a serf none the less. I wonder is that's what people primarily want... to be well fed and entertained? People seem to care little about who they're beholden to, as long as the largess continue. I feel less free than my forefathers, I feel like I have more responsibilities and fewer rights. Please take your spectator sports, conspicuous consumption and jackpots... I have no stomach for it. If the majority feels they have to trample my rights, to ensure their own, then there's something very wrong with the system.

Just another example that liars figure and figures lie... The news keeps saying that 90% of the Iraqis around the world who registered to vote, did so. Only once, did I see them report that - of the Iraqis eligible to vote, only 26% bothered to register.

How will you feel if the Iraqis vote to have the US leave and for Halliburton, Blackwater and Kellogg to loose their rich contracts? Well they probably won't and God bless them, they need protection if this is going to work.

Responsibility and self determination yes! Yes to democracy too, at least so long as it doesn't preclude self determination.

Resist non-violently... that is an underutilized technique and it has on occasion worked best. Eventually the tyrants will be boycotted by so many people, that you are likely to prevail. To bomb and kill, will make most people despise you, hurt your cause and lend legitimacy to your oppressors. On the other hand, self-defense is A-Okay, just be very cautious about taking it to the level of offensive violence. Violent protest and resistance is often counter-productive, it makes a determined oppressor dig in and gives him credibility in the minds of others. Non-violent resistance wins support from people who will admire your self-control and peacefulness. Eventually the occupiers may become so isolated and weakened economically, that they will be compelled to negotiate. Meanwhile precious lives on both sides will be spared and the cycle of violence can end.

When TPTB are through with a people, they're usually gone, gone, gone... except for occasional appearances on stamps or money and as villains or noble savages in the movies. Maybe some day the Arabs will have the honor of being on our postage stamps.

I wonder if the USA is immune to the havoc of war that we have seen inflicted on so many others, for such “noble” reasons? Even if we installed a titanium dome or missile defense system over the entire country, could it protect us from the wrath of

the enemies we're making? Will spreading democracy and nation building keep us safe? Will bombing Iran and North Korea and whoever else we don't want to have nuclear facilities keep us safe? I guess we've embarked on a path of trying to do things that way... we carry a big stick, but no longer speak softly... if we ever did!

Maybe it's logical for the USA to primarily go after dictators of oil rich countries like Iraq. Maybe that's the price, or quid pro quo for "liberating" people. The fact that tens of thousands of Iraqis have been killed may be a price the surviving Iraqis are willing to pay. No one can speak for those Iraqis who are being killed, but if we could ask them, I wonder if they'd think their sacrifice was worth it? Even asking their loved ones if all the death and destruction was worth it, gives an inaccurate assessment of what the deceased Iraqis opinions would be. Maybe it would be a bell shaped curve, some being glad to give their lives for their children and grandchildren to have a better future, and others thinking it was not worth their lives for others to have a "new Iraq."

It's kind of like asking the victims of the atomic strikes on Hiroshima or Nagasaki if their deaths were a reasonable price to pay for "shortening the war." Those who survive often think the death of others, even the death of relatives was a reasonable price, for whatever "good" comes their way after the killing ends.

The Iraqis once had one of the highest standards of living in the Middle East, then their fascist dictator Saddam decided he would like to be the new Nebuchadnezzar or Saladin; he embarked on a program of arms acquisition and military adventurism. The west obliged him with weapons and encouragement as long as his crimes didn't conflict with their interests... they even encouraged the war with Iran, which led to the death of hundreds of thousands. Now the west is working towards the McDonaldisation of Iraq and is intent on making the Iraqi people prosperous, content and harmless.

The Romans said, it would dishonor the troops who had died, to pull out of Gaul, Judeo and other countries they had conquered. Armies love to invade and occupy, but hate to leave, they usually have to be given a good kick in the ass. Funny how they like to liberate the best pieces of real estate... and rarely bother with less desirable zip codes.

The instinct to survive extends to nations and tribes, as well as to individuals. That instinct often over powers our desire to do good and to do no harm. Only, if and when we learn to peacefully coexist and resolve disputes with out violence, can we hope to enter a new era of peace and leave this terrible age of warfare in the dust bin of history. Is that even possible, will it ever happen? Work and pray for peace and please beat your swords into plow shears!

Instead of city states, I wonder if we could have citizen states? Silly to imagine that, unless we first have world peace. How would citizen states protect themselves against coalitions of bullies? I guess you'd have to have alliances, unless your

neighbors were all benign and that has never been the case.

“Smarter people”, or to be PC, more technologically advanced people, use highly mechanized forms of human slaughter and sometimes even give their “enemies” the chance to get the hell out of Dodge. I think it was the actor Peter Ustinoff who said, “War is terrorism by the rich and terrorism is war by the poor.” Von Clausewitz called war being diplomacy by other means. The Nazis, the west, Saddam, the Israelis and others have excelled at killing people from the sky with bombs. Their enemies, the insurgents and terrorists, kill their “enemies” up close and personal. The Hutus and Tutsis used machetes and bullets to kill hundreds of thousands in the period of a few weeks. No matter how you do it, killing people en-mass is murder and more victims are constantly added to the roles of silent witnesses to the homicidal side of man.

Religious people, currently Christians and Muslims, both resort to violence on a regular basis, sometimes in gleeful orgies of self-righteous murder and at other times they sadly claim that such dirty deeds were “necessary.”

McChurch is what we attend in the U.S. and overall, it’s not too bad, kind of like a Big Mac, because when the people leave they feel full. As with a Big Mac however, it’s debatable that they are ingesting anything nutritious.

A couple years after 9/11, I remember waiting for my wife outside the church sanctuary, as a boy of about 18 strode past, he looked tough, keen and hawkish. Our church regularly thanks the troops, has patriotic shows on July 4th obviously supports the war and seems interested in recruiting for the military. Hanging out of this young man’s pocket was one of those WWJD straps... I’d like to offer him a WWJB strap. He and his buddies are the impressionable foot soldiers of the church, which tells them who needs straightening out and they are more than willing to take care of business. The church IMO is simply the dominant world cult, although few people will agree with that appraisal.

A dictator steals your rights very quickly, in a democracy you loose them piece meal... so slowly in fact that it’s hard to notice they have slipped away. Given a choice, most of us prefer the latter, that way we feel less pain.

It looks like the majority of the Iraqis and Palestinians may want “democracy and entry into the world community”, but what does that mean? Does it mean that they have caved in to the US’s overwhelming military power, or did they accept an overwhelmingly powerful idea? Has the NWO won another battle, domino style and added another franchise to their theme world? Has tyranny been dealt a blow, civilization been advanced and the human spirit rewarded? I don’t know... perhaps time will tell. Meanwhile, I hope the people of Iraq and Palestine will soon be free, prosperous and living in peace.

I’d rather not have to admit that the administration was right, but if their vision

prevails, it won't matter because lots of people will be around him to remind me how wrong I was.

The Israelis occupy and gradually annex more land and it's understood that if their control of the land, which they refer to as the survival of the Jewish state is jeopardized, they will nuke you. The Islamic world, with the exception of Pakistan says if they had nukes, they would be able to take back Palestine. Who is the terrorist, who is the blackmailer? The U.S. says Israel is the only Middle Eastern nation that can have nukes, Pakistan the only Muslim nation with nukes seems to be a bit of a wild card, but presently is safely in Uncle's pocket.

If a country has no nukes, it should be prepared to tow the line, or be threatened, bullied, humiliated and possibly bombed into submission. If a country has a no nukes, it should be prepared for the possibility of a pre-emptive strike, possibly a nuclear strike. Those who are members of the nuclear club have earned the right to wear the mantle of the blackmailer. The big ones warn other countries to dismantle their nuclear weapons programs, but they keep their lethal nuclear arsenals and constantly develop new ones. Does it give me a sense of security that the US has nukes? Perhaps, but not much of one and those nukes do nothing to protect me from the bullying, threats and humiliation one faces for opening his mouth.

Considerable dissent is allowed in the U.S. and that is good, it's also a good way to keep troublesome people quiet. If you dissent or speak up too much, the "powers that be" know that someone from the lunatic fringe will take care of you and if that doesn't happen, it can easily be arranged. Maybe the rumors of black helicopters and civilian concentration camps are spread by the CIA, they are clever, devious and it's a good way to keep the sheep in line.

Jeffrey Aronson of the Foundation for Mid-East Peace was one of the experts brought in to analyze what's going on in Palestine vis a vis the election of Abu Abbas. The first thing mentioned he is that Hamas was shelling Israeli settlements. They don't bother mentioning that the first killing after the signing of the peace accord, was reportedly a Palestinian man at the hands of the Israelis. The duplicitous use of the name "Foundation for Mid-East Peace", by Jeffrey Aronson and company, gives credibility to an organization that might as well be named the Foundation to Steal Palestine. It's the same shameless, sinister, game that is played by numerous other cleverly named "foundations" and "institutes." Give your "foundation" a noble and authoritative name and you can mislead a lot of people! Follow the money, is what they say... you'll find out who's behind the "foundation."

Should a superpower invade a country and kill 100,000 to improve the lives of 20,000,000? When they do the math, the answer is yes... even if the who thing backfires and the country they are trying to "liberate" ends up in chaos and destruction. Meanwhile the superpower is likely to reap rewards in the form of ... you guessed it, oil or other essential resources. Will the 20 million think it was worth the death of their country men for them to attain a better life? Many

probably would, unless some of those killed were there loved ones. Would the 100,000 who were killed, consider it worth their dieing worthwhile to improve their countrymen's lives? I don't know and I'm pretty sure there's no way for us to ask "them." Will their 20 million compatriots actually achieve the better life? Time will tell. Will the superpower win control of the resources they seek? Probably so.... it's a very old story!

When you make a mess, you clean it up... you do unto others as you would have others do unto you. Most call this the golden rule, other people call it Karma and say it's what makes the world go around. I'm not sure that I believe it, but I am trying to comply... feebly at times, but trying to comply.

If we were genuine in our intent, we might have 150,000 troops in the Congo, where the horrors have by most accounts been worse than in Saddam's Iraq. But there is little oil for us to control in the Congo and the country is not a threat to our crucial friends. Ipso facto, there is no incentive for us liberate the Congo. It doesn't matter that children are forced to murder their parents or playmates and become soldiers. It doesn't matter that rape has become as rampant and systematic in the Congo as it has ever been anywhere at anytime in history. It doesn't matter that this civil war has taken over a million human lives. All that seems to matter is that the people of the Congo have little oil, money or any kind of a religious stranglehold over us. Once again, the west has proven to be as phony as a Battery Park Rolex.

For years I've heard the advice not to talk about politics or religion, but I do it anyway. Lately, it seems that the two things are getting so intertwined, that you can't talk about one without the other one being interjected. We have a president who seems to think that God is telling him to bomb people in order to liberate them ... and, by the way (wink and nod) there's lots of oil to be had. Meanwhile the people of the Congo, Sudan and a dozen or so other places, kill and abuse each other with abandon, but they have no oil and little hope of "liberation."

If I mention that I'm interested in dual citizenship, I'm criticized for being a liberal, socialist and unpatriotic. I guess my definition of patriotism is different than yours, it's in line with the advice of first President George W., the man on the dollar bill. He said, "it is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world." It seems like our first president saw things differently than our recent presidents have.

Everyone's capable of lying, cheating and probably murder... The most pious person will lie in a custody battle over his or her kids and it doesn't take much to get young men to kill "the enemy."

Chapter Nine

I'm an observer and as an Arab American, I don't always share the mainstream point of view. That usually works to my disadvantage, as I sometimes say unpopular things and there are inevitable consequences. I try not to go too far in expressing my views, since freedom of speech is both allowable and a punishable offense.

The Israelis' frequent vocalizing of their "legal" claims to Palestine, proves the value of a paper trail. Honest or not, they have "paper" that points to them as being the rightful owners of Palestine and it is accepted as credible by billions of people. Meanwhile the Arab remnant in Palestine, have little in the way of a "certified" paper trail, even though they are likely true descendents of the people that lived there 10,000 years ago... there is paper and there is the gold standard...in the end paper is worthless.

The congressman from Indiana was on C-Span, talking about his visit with Hamid Karzai the leader of Afghanistan. The congressman had asked Karzai if there was anything he wanted to tell the people of Indiana. He had expected the Afghan leader to say thank you, but instead he had said congratulations. Congratulations to the American and Afghan people for coming so far in the last couple of years. He's only partly right... three years ago, the Taliban was blowing up thousand year old statues of the Buddha and executing men and women in the soccer stadium in Kabul... now they're back...

The Taliban had gone to bizarre extremes, violating almost every accord of decency and civilization known to man. Now the Afghans have a chance to do things better than the Taliban did and to vastly improve their country. They don't need to precisely imitate the west, because we are not doing as great as we think we are. The Palestinians and Iraqis may have similar chances, but it doesn't make the theft of Palestine right, or the destruction of Iraq on the behalf of Zionism and the oil companies right. It's just business and history according to the usual models of might making right and absolute power corrupting absolutely.

For what it's worth, I'm not sure I prefer American law over, early English common law or even very much over Shari-a law. Present day American law is so asinine, that the only ones protected are the corporations, the rich and whoever is having their fifteen minutes of fame. I wouldn't mind seeing constitutional law based more on natural order and human rights... but that may be an oxymoron.

Democracy as practiced in the West, often treads heavily on the individual's rights. Meanwhile this system is being forced on others... I hope they get it right! I think my country is rapidly losing its moral authority... if we ever had it in the first place. Justice has deteriorated into tyranny by the majority, the rich and the

corporation, almost all of which are headed by the TPTB and ideologues emanating from both sides of the aisle, but differing very little in the final analysis. I'd almost prefer a benevolent despot over the current system, unless we can improve it. Isn't that what you guys are waiting for, Jesus as a supernatural despot, to rule, justly and firmly over the entire earth? Maybe that day will come and maybe the pretenders who rule in his stead will finally get their just deserts.

Middle East dictators are indeed a bane on their populations, but these countries have also been on a war footing for hundreds of years. I consider a fourth crusade to have started at about the time Napoleon invaded Egypt. Later the British and France invaded, then Zionists gained control of Palestine and most recently the US has invaded the land between the rivers. When we have been in our most serious wars, our presidents have also been almost dictatorial... look at Lincoln and FDR. Meanwhile, our current president and his neocon cronies are usurping more of our rights by the day. Have you ever heard the quote "Anyone who would trade his freedom for security deserves neither."

The German chancellor made some remarks back in 2005, regarding the need for a study to determine if NATO should remain as it is in Europe. He was of course attacked by FOX news and others of that ilk as ungrateful and scheming. Maybe the Germans and other Europeans are not as excited as Joe six pack seems to be with the way the US is being run. Maybe Europe does not want to put its eggs in this basket when it comes to defense and their foreign policies.

Like nations, people can change from within, or they will be changed from the outside ... usually by the long arm of the law, by the consequences of their actions or in the case of humans, by medical consequences.

I think that bombing people into; submission, compliance, democracy or whatever you want to call it is a questionable activity. You say you're aiming for the bad guys and the truth is you kill a lot of "insurgents" and terrorists, but you also kill many innocent bystanders. In the long run this may work for everyone involved, since the dead civilians will have no voice and you will be writing the history books.

There are a lot of things that I don't like, but I have no choice but to accept them. It's funny... after a period of acceptance and resignation, I usually get over wanting to change those things to my way of thinking.

The more I criticize you, the more I really want to get along with you. The more I want to hate you, the more I need to love you. I can fake affection and humility, but why the heck should I? I can't change who I am, I can only work on trying to be a better person. You can encourage, persuade or smash me, but you're unlikely to remake me in the image you want for me. How can a person be something they're not?

I've been wrong about many things and I'm sure to be wrong many more times. That's not such a bad thing, since I'm concerned that the world is in serious trouble and it would be nice to be wrong about that. On the other hand, I hope that I'm right about a few things and hope to write a thing or two that might even prove useful.

The news report said that x% of US students didn't even know what the first amendment was and that x% thought newspapers had to get government approval before printing their stories...Wow!

I may or may not be your intellectual equal, and you seem to think that you know what's best for the public, but I'll be darned it I'm going to let you run my life without a fight! I'm likely to loose, because the weak seldom prevail against the PTB, but maybe, just maybe the meek will inherit the earth.

When I was growing up, I learned about the slave trade the "Arab slave traders" were always and among those implicated. They were sometimes portrayed as the major villains and I don't doubt they deserved their share of guilt. I wonder though how many English, EU and American fortunes were built on this nefarious trade? The involvement of Africans in enslaving their brothers and sisters, has been a little less well known, but I think it's being addressed now. Africans were partly complicit in their own holocaust, selling each other into slavery for trade beads and iron bars.

Nice people don't steal property, money or countries... all races and nationalities have been guilty of these crimes, all have been part of the problem and all can be part of the solution.

Bush visited the EU and met with a mixed review. Some applauded him and others carried signs saying things like "Bush #1 terrorist." Personally I don't care to defend his reputation, but George W. doesn't need me to speak up for him, after all, he has many speech writers and bombers on his payroll.

Nice people won't steal your car, your money or your country...

The "powers that be" may be successful in their objectives, especially if they provide enough material goods to enough people. After all, the necessities of life are what people need to survive and many seem utterly satisfied with food, TVs, cars, nice clothes and a pension. I'm not sure if that would soothe my soul, but I'm only speaking for myself and I don't live like a monk. It appears that many people are content to be "subjects", debtors, or units of consumption and production in our brave new McWorld.

Ward Churchill called the victims of 911 little Eichmans and I think he later said something about having been overly dramatic in order to make a point. I wonder, however how many of us have voted for; candidates and administrations, whose

intent has been to bomb Muslims or others into submission in order to achieve certain “goals?” I’m also guessing that very few Americans have ever joined a protest against the tens of billions of dollars spent by the U.S. on bombers, tanks and other weapons that have been deployed against the people of the Middle East and others for generations.

We have planted seeds of hatred, so why are we surprised when we harvest fields of violence? Since we still show no desire to pound our swords into plow shears, I won’t be surprised if we continue to harvest these bitter fruits.

Unfortunately I find myself like an island, but I could some day be part of a chain of islands, or even part of an archipelago. When you look at the earth from space, even the continents look a bit like islands.

It wouldn’t break my heart to see the Palestinians get their land back, but it seems unlikely. Let the Israelis have NYC and my state as well if they want it... On paper, they “own” much of it anyway... all I have is a mortgage, the “powers that be” have the deed. I’m sure we’d be fairly compensated, just like they tell me the Palestinians were. If you are God’s chosen people and if the rest of us are human cattle (goyum), I’m sure you are managing the “herd” with the goal of achieving the best possible outcome... but for who? Funny the word goyum, isn’t even in the MS Word spell checker. After all, whoever controls the meaning of words, controls the debates. If we aren’t even aware of the existence of certain words, how can we be for or against what they mean? Unless they allow us to learn these words in our schools, where we are “educated”, we are powerless... I think this was called double speak by George Orwell!

“What!”, you scream at me. It would take another holocaust for the Palestinians to get their land back, we can’t have that. I don’t want that either, but if the world and the Israelis would treat the Palestinians justly, maybe both sides could find a way to live together in peace. Is it impossible for these two *related* peoples to live together without either side dominating the other? That’s a question that only time can answer...?

Along similar lines, whoever controls the money supply controls the government. The quote "give me control of a nation's money and I care not who makes it's laws", is attributed to Mayer Amschel Bauer Rothschild. Are the rumors about Truman receiving a grocery bag full of cash from the Zionist lobby, true or just an anti-Semitic urban myth? If by chance it is true, is it possible that this money helped him defeat Dewey? Remember the incorrect newspaper headline “Dewey Defeats Truman”, it was apparently a rather unexpected upset.

I also find it interesting that after Truman won the election, the U.S. voted for Palestine to be partitioned, which reportedly was also a surprise to many. The Saudi’s were reportedly among those caught of guard, since the may have had been told by General George Marshall, our highest ranking military man, that the U.S.

would not vote that way. It's reminiscent of the shock and disappointment that Lawrence of Arabia is said to have felt, when the British didn't allow the Arabs the independence they allegedly had offered them for helping to drive the Ottoman Turks out of Arabia. I'm using words like reportedly and allegedly, because the "facts" are shrouded in controversy and disputed by those on the opposing sides in this debate.

If Truman did receive the money, which is easier to refute than to prove, but also hard to completely discredit... could he have *repaid* the Zionist lobby for their grocery bags of cash, by changing the US vote at the UN on Israel's creation, from "abstain" to "for."

Whether or not the events above happened, the US has still spent the last fifty years and probably hundreds of billions of dollars giving the Israelis advanced weapons to kill Muslims. Are these allegations true or false? If they were *all* truly false, I seriously doubt that Muslims would be flying airplanes into our buildings.

Meanwhile, back in Crawford, Texas, at the Bush ranch, the administration accuses Iran of trying to develop nukes. I wonder how the Israelis got the nuclear material they needed for the 200 or so nukes they reportedly have and isn't it interesting that they're the only ones in the Middle East "allowed" to have them... With enough nukes to destroy the world as we know it and the will to use them if they don't "get their way", are they not implicitly black mailing the world?

Am I paranoid? If you bomb people half a world away, why would I be surprised to find myself on one of your lists? After all I'm your neighbor - you can reach out and swat me without even getting off the couch.

Politically, if you're a "liberal", you pretty much have to tow the party line. If you're a "conservative", there is also a party line to tow. I don't agree with either of those "religions", therefore if you feel compelled to label me... I'd prefer the term "independent."

A while back on "The Connection" with Ron Reagan and Ms. Crowley, they debated the 10 Commandments and whether they should be allowed, or removed from public buildings. Then they debated the use of torture at Abu Graif and Gitmo. The "expert" arguing against torture was Mr. Avi Cover, who may have been an ACLU lawyer. Cover, attacked Rumsfeld and said he should be held responsible for the US policy of using torture, but I wonder if he minds that the Israelis torture Palestinians?

It's important for the religious right to have the Ten Commandments posted on public buildings in the U.S.A., this strengthens their case for a "crusade" in the Middle East. The 10 Commandments reinforces that this is a Christian country, although the fundamentalists are canny and argue quite convincingly, that our laws are based on our Judeo-Christian heritage. (I wonder where the Magna Carta fits

into all this... although I agree there is some overlap.) If the fundamentalists get enough power, I wouldn't be surprised to see them take it a step further. If we are a Judeo-Christian nation, we will be encouraged to fight this crusade and they will justify the use of torture, which the church has used repeatedly in its various witch hunts and inquisitions. I'm thinking of the Spanish inquisition and the Salem witch hunts for starters. In religious conflicts "silly" things like the Geneva conventions fly out the door ... after all doesn't the Bible call for an eye for an eye?

The first of the Ten Commandments, is a statement of religion that is exclusionary and in one version (see below) even threatens non-believers with destruction. In the King James version, it says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Does this mean that the God of the Bible must be first in the land and isn't that an endorsement of "state" religion.

The Catholic Bible reportedly says, "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange Gods before me." The Hebrew version reportedly says, "I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." One version of the Bible states a related passage (Exodus 22:20), as saying, "He that sacrificeth unto any god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed." Take your pick... which version of the first commandment should be endorsed by the state?

There were hundreds of Ten Commandment monuments, "donated to communities across the country in the late 1950s and early 1960s through a partnership between Hollywood producer Cecil B. DeMille and the Fraternal Order of Eagles." It has been alleged (on NPR 3/2/05) that DeMille did this to promote his movie "The Ten Commandments."

Does the U.S. Constitution or the Declaration of Independence state that American law comes from God as Moses said the Ten Commandments came from? Or does it say that American law is derived from the consent of the governed?

Most of our wars have had religious overtones or undertones - as they are quite useful in rallying the troops. It seems that we're always fighting some "heathen" nation or tribe and religion helps dehumanize them... it also helps people forget about the commandment "though shalt not kill." Religion when wrongly applied, can help a tyrant fire up the populace, keep them on a war time footing and allow for unobstructed marshal law. I hope we are not headed down such a path, due to the war on terror and the Patriot Act. Are we holding US citizens prisoner at GITMO, or elsewhere without representation or due process and are we likewise sending prisoners to other countries for incarceration and torture... I'm not sure, but it wouldn't surprise me and the administration is trying to write these techniques into law... habeas corpus... who cares about that!

What would you think about your 19 year old being snatched from a war zone, even if he wasn't even a fighter, flown half way around the world, allowed no contact

with you, given no legal counsel, charged with no crime, sexually humiliated, tortured and held for several years in an 8 x 8 foot jail cell? Why are you SO surprised that they hate us? I hope our government eliminates such punishment - instead of broadening its application of such “alternative techniques” to other “enemies of the state.”

There’s been various shows about the “Bible Code” on TV lately – and to no one’s surprise, they find many negative references to Arabs and Muslims. If as much time and effort was spent scouring the Bible for negative references to neocons or others, I wonder what they’d turn up?

“Guys like that ain’t got no manhood left anyway. So it’s a hell of a lot of fun to shoot them.” This was stated by Lieutenant General James Mattis, about Afghan men who abused women in Taliban days. (page 7, US News & World Report February 14, 2005.) I wonder if this “brave” and noble general just feels this way about the Taliban, or if he’d be willing to kill other undesirables and other *unmanly* men? It seems that such remarks, if they’re even reported, are routinely dismissed or excused. After all, we’re told “that’s how marines *have* to think” ... at the moment, living and dieing by the sword comes to mind.

In US New & World Report, on February 14, 2005 on Page 71, was a purely propagandistic advertisement from a an organization called “FLAME.” (Facts and Logic About the Middle East.) Gerardo Joffe, was listed as the groups president. “FLAME is a tax-exempt, non-profit educational 501 ©(3) organization. It’s purpose is to the research and publication of facts regarding developments in the Middle East and exposing false propaganda that might harm the interests of the United States and its allies in that area of the world...” In my own “unbiased” opinion, this is just another blatantly ZOGanistic tool carefully designed to “educate” the American people... the large print ad, made every effort to appear authoritative... Goebels might have been very impressed!

Considering the “education” we receive and opinion that education is largely indoctrination, some might want to opt out of the public education system. A case could even be made for re-education, to free us of our formal learning ... like the song says, “we don’t need no education, we don’t need no thought control.”

You talk about the US being founded on Judeo-Christian principles and I agree that premise is largely correct, although the principles were sometimes distorted, misused or discriminatory to begin with. Now the positive aspects of our Judeo-Christian heritage are being twisted to make us more like practitioners of Voodoo and American culture is devolving into a decadent mess. Pimping is now portrayed as cool and women are commonly referred to as “whores”, how can I embrace this cultural malaise?!

On the radio this morning, a “Ms. Rosen” stated that as long as “hate speech” is allowed, there will violence. So who’s going to be in charge of determining what is

hate speech and what is free speech? Funny how anti Arab rhetoric runs rampant and groups promoting it are given “educational and tax exempt status” but Arab American newspapers are attacked as being anti-Semitic. Arab charities are shut down for giving money to Palestinians, and Jewish and Christian money flows to the Israelis, who use it to steal Palestinian land, train snipers and kill more Arabs.

According to a “Ms. Sasson” on the news, important Israeli government officials had been secretly funneling money to illegal settlers for over twenty years. Ms. Sasson, herself an Israeli, broke the story – revealing how the Israelis are constantly changing the facts on the ground.

Regarding Abu Graif, killing Iraqis, freedom fighters, versus terrorists in Palestine and Iraq etc. I wouldn’t mind seeing war crime trials for GW, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, Perle, Kristol, Sharon and others. The guilty could be being punished and justice might lead to peace.... of course advocating such “nonsense” has no upside and a very definite downside.

English, Chinese, Arabs, Jews, Africans and most others... I have considerable respect for your contributions, but also have disrespect for your excesses and would never trust any people 100%.

If torture works, why aren’t we using it on criminals in America to reduce crime? They say you’d better trim your mustache, before someone else cuts the whole damn thing off... and brother our nation needs a trim.

If we are goyum, then what’s the big deal about having a group of “enlightened” superiors directing and managing our (the herd’s) lives, for the “better?” Anyway, it seems this does not bother most people and they say “what you don’t know can’t hurt you.” It’s not a father knows best world, only God knows best and some of us don’t believe that our earthly “masters” are necessarily doing God’s work.

I don’t deny that the Israelis were a dominant force in Palestine off and on in ancient times. What I question, is whether or not God ordained all the things they claim. *If* the Hebrew’s victories were the result of their own “plans” and not God’s, then they may not have been unlike other genocidal tribes and their current “claims” become suspect. Thus, they will have to continue, as always, to change the “facts on the ground”, and oppress the native people with brutal force... I just wish we would stop supporting them in this.

If American mothers wonder why their boys are violent, they might look at how they’re raised and what they’re exposed to. American culture teaches us that we are almost always *right* and that we have a “manifest destiny” to remake the world in our image. TV, movies, pop music and video games glorify violence and depravity. It seems that in almost every generation, we send our boys off to war, mostly to secure vital natural resources... and to keep our society up to speed in the art and science of war. We train our children - girls as well as boys now, to be

efficient, gung-ho, (conscienceless?) mechanized killers. Why should we be surprised that a percentage of them will resort to violent against their spouses, children or others?

I don't care much for labels, I'm content to say that I believe what I believe and if a label must be applied then please call me an independent. If you call me a Christian I won't be offended, but I don't care if you don't call me one either... if you call me agnostic I'll be a little offended and if you call me an atheist, I'll respectfully disagree and be offended... but isn't that your intent when you apply labels?

Sorry to be the one to tell you, but all men are natural born killers. For most of us, the "switch" is never flipped, for a few it is, either by madness, desperation, hatred or perhaps legally by the government - when it needs "a few good men." With the help of; supersonic aircraft, long range missiles, machine guns and bombs, it's easier than ever to persuade us to kill the enemy, never mind that he or she is human too. From safely inside fighter jets and stealth bombers, there is little to worry about while annihilating defenseless people on the ground.

Religion is the dark underbelly of spirituality, it is how TPTB control and frame the discussion. People are eager to join because the promises are great, the threats terrible and there are nice perks that come with the membership card.

Why were the Jews "chosen" and who chose them? Maybe they were selected to manage the goyum, because someone considered them bright enough to do the job. Were there fiery chariots that descended from the heavens and made contact with the Hebrew patriarchs? Doesn't the bible mention flying wheels or disks? Would alien visitors want to be seen, with their bulging eyes and bean heads, *or* would they choose to speak from behind fiery bushes and out of the mouths of donkeys? Maybe they were ventriloquists! Who was Jesus' father? About all feel comfortable in accepting is that it wasn't Joseph. Was Mary artificially inseminated? Was his father a Roman centurion, or some other *unacceptable* man as certain traditions suggest? Was Jesus married to, or especially close to Mary Magdalene? There are lots of related questions and very few answers are forthcoming!

Friends have told me that if I don't like what's going on in the USA, that "for my own safety" I should keep my mouth shut. Others say that if I don't like it here, I should go live somewhere else. The first group might be concerned for the safety of dissenters like me, but the second group is simply making a mockery out of the concept of free speech. These are often the same people who loudly proclaim that Ben Franklin was right about defending to the death the rights of people to say what every they want. It's ironic how those fine ideals go straight out the window, if these "patriots" don't like what you're saying.

Some know the folly and horror of war, while others - sadly, will learn the hard way and will reap the grim harvest. What both sides have done, may be understandable or justifiable to certain fanatics. It remains true however, that killing is usually akin

to murder... we can fix broken windows... usually, it is impossible to fix badly broken bodies.

I never even considered myself an “Arab American” until adulthood - that’s when I saw what was going on... before that I was simply an “American.” I wish I had a buck for every time I’ve heard a disparaging remark about Arabs, I could afford to buy us both a nice dinner!

The “right” is willing to bomb civilians and in so doing, kill pregnant women and their unborn fetuses. This has certainly occurred in Iraq and in the indiscriminate aerial bombings of Germany and Japan. If you get in the way of the “war machine”, then even our “superior” morality goes straight out the window.

Al Qaeda, was described on the radio, as having morphed into an informal network of Sunni Moslem groups with a common goal - willing to use bombings or even WMDs to achieve their goals.... sounds to me like they have a lot in common with the west, America and Zionism.

If Iraq is not pacified and subjugated, it will be left in chaos, with the Shiites and Kurds armed and trained to fight the Sunnis more effectively than in the past. While this chaotic new status quo would not be as good as a peaceful, compliant oil rich client state, TPTB certainly prefers that outcome, to a nation that might threaten Israel.

Alan Dershowitz says torture should be defined so that interrogators know what they’re allowed to do. He said that physical pain up to the point of death is torture. He also mentioned inserting a sterilized needle under the fingernail for 15 minutes, causing excruciating pain but no permanent damage. He seemed vague about whether this is torture, or if it is justifiable? By implication, he seems to be saying that such techniques are okay in the ticking time bomb scenario. I don’t think that many people would argue that you can hang a man by his thumbs, if he knows where a nuke is and it’s going to kill a million people if it’s not disarmed. The neocoms like Dershowitz, Krauthiemer etc. love to use this example as an excuse to justify torturing people as a matter of course, to get them to talk -- period. They also are trying to make the accepted definition of torture something like physical pain that leads to “organ failure.” My, my, my... “we have met the enemy and he is us”... Pogo.

Dershowitz is one of the slickest -- or should I say sleaziest lawyers I’ve ever seen, which he proves almost every time he presents his expert opinion on TV. If it were my loved ones being threatened, I have to admit I’d be for allowing torture, so maybe I’m as bad or worse than him. I think most people would be willing to do absolutely anything when our loved ones are threatened, or in some cases to just get our way.

A funny thing about extremists, be they Muslim, Christian, Jewish or any other

religion. Although they usually reject alcohol or pot, they could use a good "chilling" more than just about anyone, however if they need an attitude adjustment, they tend to take prescription anti-depressants. Since these are legally controlled, they have few qualms about taking them... and they use and abuse them as much as the rest of society abuses other intoxicants. Like most people, they feel it's acceptable to use prescription drugs and it allows them to feel morally superior to the poor dope heads out there.

The fact that I feel like I'm on a treadmill often makes me write angrily, but I usually calm down and do some editing. I also realize that I'm wrong about many things, but that doesn't stop me from trying to benefit from catharsis of the process of recording thoughts and words... whether it is about the Middle East or anything else.

If you're going to manage and rule the goyum, be they Iraqis, American or whoever, you'd better be darn sure you're doing it for their benefit and not for your own. At the moment it looks to me like you are missing the mark.

Liberation theology has been out there for a long time... now they're progressing to, the successor of their long held views of western superiority and manifest destiny... I will call it "conquest theology."

Another Easter came and went and these were my impressions... at church, the pastor's early remarks reminded me that you have only one choice... join the team. You can't say "maybe", "no" or "I'll think about it", you are advised and being taught that you must become a Christian or burn in hell forever. Later, we went to the Unitarian church and my wife was upset by the service, especially the song, "Not, Because the Bible tells me so", which our friend, a member of the congregation had written and performed. I doubt he expected there would be a fundamentalist Christians in the audience and that she would be deeply offended by the song. On the way home, she said, I hope they're happy ... because I think they're going to burn in hell. I did not comment, as I sympathized with her -- regarding her hurt feelings, but personally I found the song compelling.

It made me think, George Bush invokes the same imagery as the pastor, there's to be no "sitting on the fence"... you're either with us or against "us." Sorry gang, you might consider me unpatriotic or "damned", but I'm neither with you or against you. I don't like it when you call me a fence sitter, because it's obviously meant as an attack, or at least a rebuke, but I can think of worse labels. It reminds me of the conservative senator who was on TV the other day -- he said you know it's in the middle don't you dead cats and other road kill.

Chapter Ten

The human race has been evolving physically and socially for a million years. Having enjoyed; the renaissance, age of reason, declaration of Independence, John Locke and Voltaire -- we were moving gradually out from under the thumb of princes and priests. Now we seem to be moving backwards, to where the high and mighty can squash us under their thumbs. We are moving back to unquestioning acceptance of fantastic, unsubstantiated adult fairy tales and the abandonment of reason and research. It reminds me of that quote something to the effect of -- we will have freedom when the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last pope.

In domestic, foreign and affairs of the heart, compromise is a noble course, while capitulation leads to ruin or dissatisfaction. Even though compromise means neither party is completely happy, at least it offers a chance for reconciliation, a new beginning and preservation of innocent lives.

We now even outsource torture of prisoners, it's cheap, poorly regulated and there is no public outcry.

In the final analysis, it seems that virtually all groups will do absolutely anything to get their way. Some are just a little more concerned with making it look legal and sanctioned or officially authorized. Others care nothing about formalities or niceties -- everyone will resort to the use of force and most will even apply extreme brutality if "necessary."

It's a vicious circle, if a person or country screws enough people -- eventually someone will get them back. Look at what happened to the Roman Empire -- eventually the barbarians all surpassed them... look out America! It doesn't necessarily matter that you've deposed a few evil tyrants along the way, especially if that was incidental to your primary objectives of self interest. Whoever rises to power or is "installed", is often as arbitrary and tyrannical as the last guy and you may be blamed. It doesn't help that our military industrial complex and profiteers have made billions in the process.

Warring our way to prosperity? It's worked throughout history, but it doesn't mean it's right hopefully it's unsustainable and on it's last legs.

I was taught that if you think something is wrong, you should try and change it for the better. Eventually I realized that what they really meant was, if I think something is wrong and they agree, then I should try and change it, otherwise I should leave well enough alone!

You're right, it's a mistake to "mis-underestimate" Mr. Bush -- but that doesn't mean I respect, admire or agree with him. IMO he's still a scoundrel, liar, thief,

self-righteous fool, rich daddy's boy, coat taylor, usurper of individual rights, NWO crony and dry drunk (while that was a mouthful) ... but that doesn't make him much different than most rulers. Fortunately for him, he's surrounded by far more talented scoundrels and expert chess players... I doubt if he even plays a decent game of checkers. I think he knowingly lied about WMDs, Iraq being connected to 9/11 and much more.

I believe Bush is in the pocket of the; oil companies, Zionists, religious extremists and is simply the puppet selected to do their bidding. Other than that, he's probably a great guy ... after all he was a college baseball ball player, cheerleader or something! All the talk about democracy in the Middle East has been a little more than a subterfuge and the version developed by his handlers. The eventual outcome for the neocon/NWO's agenda is still uncertain, I just hope that things work out for the people of the Middle East. If the ends justify the means and if in "the end", the survivors in Iraq are noticeably better off, then Bush may be exonerated or honored. Of course as long as his cronies write the history books, he will be portrayed as a hero anyway.

Regarding nationalistic and religious affiliations, most people believe that they are manifestly right in all they believe and do. People almost instinctively believe that if you are not working for a cause they support, then you are either "not working", or "up to no good." Human beings are loathe to recognize and admit to errors in judgment. It's like trying to "win" an argument with someone whose job or security depends on them believing certain things... they have too much vested in their misconceptions.

To compound the problem, we have given certain people or categories of people, legal superiority over others and they are willing, nee anxious to use their "special" status to run the show for the rest of us. I sometimes feel like a pawn, coerced into financing and enabling the agendas of others. I will leave the nature of the coercion to your imagination. How can we have agape love for one another when we have such a history? It's one thing to forgive, but without a lobotomy, how can I forget? When it comes down to it, I don't think that I should I forget!

My next door neighbor and I are of different religions persuasions and so far we have gotten along fine. As long as one of us doesn't decide that God has given us the other ones land, we are likely to continue to coexist and even be friends.

Chosen? Goyum? I don't like it one bit, but then what do you expect? I also don't take the Ishmael factor nearly as seriously as you do. Funny how "Ismail" is corrected to Ishmael on my spell checker, but goyum isn't in there at all...is someone trying to hide it?

Brothers... you're blowing people up! Isn't there some other way to solve your problems? This must be one serious disagreement... and you find no other way to communicate.

What was the extent of the U.S. oil embargo on Japan just prior to the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor? Did we stop selling them oil, or did we persuade other oil producers to stop selling them oil as well? What would we do if we could not buy the oil we needed on the open market? Maybe the oil embargo was being used to punish Japan for their atrocities in China and elsewhere. Some of the OPEC countries tried to punish us for our Middle Eastern policies in the 70's, but we were too powerful for that and eventually would have taken their oil by force.

You say that things are black and white, while I often see shades of grey. How do you see the role of England in history? Were they good or bad? I would give them a "C", but according to your grading scale, they deserve an "A."

I complain vociferously in writing, but little in person... you criticize me for this and have some basis for that. On the other hand, it helps me work through problems and feelings before addressing them angrily or emotionally, so maybe there's a healthy aspect to it as well... at least I think there is.

Growing up, I never considered myself anything but an American, I don't recall the concept of being an Arab-American probably ever entering my mind. It was at college that I encountered rabid anti-Arab/Muslim sentiments for the first time. Charley from down the hall called me a NY Camel jock and my friends advised me not to mess with the good old boy, or he'd dismantle me. I didn't think too much about it, because it seemed to me that Charley was mostly teasing. Other incidents on campus were more transparent, like the drunken student at the bar, ranting that he wanted to get his hands on an Iranian and beat the crap out of him... this was during the hostage crisis. During this period, I began to realize that Muslims/Arab Americans were unpopular, and began feeling the first twinges of prejudice against "us." I still don't use the label Arab American with any regularity, but I realize *that* is what I am and realize "we" are no more popular today than we were all those years ago.

Quiz question...

Who decided 'who' would be the "chosen people?" :

- a. God
- b. The chosen people.
- c. Aliens
- d. All of the above
- e. None of the above

It seems that everyone's for human rights, as long as theirs are at the top of the list.

Sometimes, the critics say seems like democracy is little better than any run of the mill dictatorship. People have been writing about its shortcomings for hundreds, if not thousands of years. Eventually, the public realizes they can vote "in" any benefits they want and the elected officials have to comply, or else they will lose their

jobs. You end up with tyranny by the majority, special interest groups competing for implementation of their agendas and the wealthy influencing the process every step of the way.

Doesn't the Bible say something about Jesus returning to reign supreme and with a rod of iron to boot? Does that imply, that at least in this case, a king or strongman is the best form of rule? Although not supporting dictatorships, I am in favor of whatever form of government succeeds in constitutionally and permanently guaranteeing each individual's human and civil rights. I'm opposed to any thing else and can't see why some of us willingly enforce laws that dis-empower and oppress their fellow citizens. Why do we arrest each other for anything other than violence, property or white collar crimes? I guess that doing so pays the bills!

When I open up as requested, I tend to be ridiculed, punished or belittled... that's not much incentive for openness.

"A man's character is his fate"... Herakles

Now days, some people call you a traitor if you question state, and a heretic if you question the church... not a bad way to stifle debate! I was raised in a country where peaceful dissenters used to be called the loyal opposition or seekers of the truth. Now unfortunately, things have changed for the worst. I pray this is only a phase we are going through, because I still want America to flourish... just not at the expense of other nations.

I'm not antiwar every single time, but I am most of the time. I think there are usually much better ways to sort things out. There are methods that don't leave corpses rotting in the noon day sun. There are methods that don't rely on thinning the ranks of poor and working class kids, while old men bark from the rear, or from posh cabinet rooms. There are usually peaceful solutions that don't leave parents, spouses and children orphaned or alone, left only with folded flags, shiny medals and sealed coffins.

There are ways of solving problems that don't enrich arms manufacturers, profiteering stock holders and other war mongers. It would be nice to live in a world where taxes were spent to cure diseases and perfect alternative energy. Instead we spend our national treasure to invent ever more terrible bombs and to poison civilians with uranium "enriched" weapons in our greedy quest for fossil fuel and dominance over others.

It's still all about power and glory, kicking ass and taking names.... all about oil and land, or whatever else we think we need.

If yours is a culture of life, and you are opposed to all abortions, why are you willing to level cities, when you know there will be pregnant women with innocent fetuses killed? In Germany and Japan, you killed hundreds of thousands of civilians in

seconds or in a night, in Vietnam, you killed tens of thousands in days or weeks and in Iraq you have killed many thousands in bombing raids. Oh well, *at least* you're killing fewer people to get your way, horrible and sick as it still is.

I may agree with Ben Franklin in principal, but I still find his words somewhat vain, propagandistic, manipulative and backed up by the blood of fine young men, not his own.

Gerald Posner was on TV the other night, spouting the usual biased party line, which included a small amount of truth, and a large dose of propaganda for mass manipulation.

It wasn't too long ago that I watched a report about the UN oil for food scandal, and a genuine scandal it seems to have been. They call it money laundering and say the money ended up going to terrorists. This very well could be true, just as it may be true that the state of Israel has been a major beneficiary of laundered money for its war machine. These funds have come from the U.S. tax payer and from financial "assets" worldwide. In both of these cases, the perpetrators believe that the ends justifies the means. In the US, we accept only one of those "ends" -- the one that says Israel is always right.

Everyone has an agenda, from poor beggars and children, to powerful men and women. Everyone should have the right to pursue their agenda, as long as they don't harm others or impose their will on the unwilling... and there in lies the rub.

Russia has offered to host a mid east peace summit and the Palestinians have accepted their invitation. The Israelis have so far rejected the invitation. Why should they attend a summit, where unlike -- one hosted by the USA, they may have a slightly less biased arbitrator? It would be no surprise if they eventually agree to attend... but first there might be backroom deals to make sure that they have "parity" in any negotiations.

The Israelis claim title to the Holy land, have control of it and *apparently* "legal title" at least according to the UN. The Arabs also claim title to the Holy Land, but have lost control. To help cement their claim to the land, the Israelis expelled Palestinians from hundred of villages when they won the war of 1948... I suppose some will say the Arabs left *voluntarily*, but it was out of fear of retribution in my opinion.

The Israelis' obsession with "legal" title to the land is understandable for a people who believe so much in "the law." For their part, the Arabs are alleged to have persecuted the Jews in the decades leading up to 1948, which certainly didn't help things. It would be nice if the two peoples could live in peace and share the Holy Land equally, but that's difficult, when both want full control. The degree to which peace can be achieved, is likely be commensurate with the amount of justice meted out to the people in the region.

To be “co-opted”, means that your time, energy and possibly your life will be used to advance someone else’s agenda. Usually it is done via skillful manipulation of your ideas and opinions. Cooptation is achieved by “education”, entertainment, the news and influencing every aspect of the culture we live in.

Abu Graif? The government/military investigation was the usual white wash and of course most people were fine with that. John Hudson, Dean of the Franklin Pierce Law Center said the investigation, “failed to deal with it in a forthright and morally courageous way.” Meanwhile former Justice Department lawyer, John Whu and others made the rounds on behalf of the administration. They have largely managed to "explain away" any wrong doings, pointing out how much less we torture than the other guys do and generally covering up the role of higher ups in the government. Meanwhile Sergeant Darby -- the whistle blower at Abu Graif is in protective custody along with other members of his family. Our country has a very effective way of keeping people in line, whistle blowers are called "turncoats" or traitors and treated accordingly. The government’s white wash investigations exasperates the situation and gives those who threaten the whistle blowers more ammunition... and those who would reveal the truth -- second thoughts.

CNN, reports on the latest technology for detecting nuclear contraband at our ports... The scientist interviewed said he wants to do this so that Oakland doesn’t go up in a mushroom cloud. That’s great, but why do you refuse to address the root cause of terrorism in a fair and balanced way?

The people who run the show are willing to put their time in on the treadmill, they are driven to succeed and probably will. You can join them, fight them, be co-opted or victimized by them,...or try to opt out, but that’s darn near impossible. You’re in their sights and their plans for “change” include you, whether you like it or not. They believe that you are either with, or against them and if they decide you’re not with them, you better watch out!

When the Israelis came for the Palestinians and forced them out of 500 villages you did nothing, in fact you aided and abetted the crime. They continue to "win" more Palestine land, while you arm, finance and make excuses for them. Be assured that your fancy talk means little to many people. I may be wrong, but ask the Indians, the victims of Mai Lai and various other "enemies", if the US government is consistently humane and trustworthy.

I should try to save people whoever they are, but don’t expect me to aid and abet those who make war on behalf of self-righteous crusades.

You are vehemently anti-abortion and staunchly pro war... I think you might be half right.

Lot’s of stuff is inevitable, especially in the long run... we should remember that

when we throw our weight around as if there will never be consequences. Do you really think that your aircraft carrier which you use to project your power around the world are impervious to the latest Russian, Chinese or other countries nuclear missiles? Where will your war planes land when their floating bases are someday destroyed? Could we end up with a government as repressive as Saddam's if we are backed into a corner and our military "deterrent" seriously damaged? If we get a dose of the destruction we have wreaked on others, what will happen to law and order in our country? Will we Balcanize? Will the ethnic gangs, Crips, MS13 etc. etc. be able to terrorize us and will our government protect us? If they do, will it be by incarcerating even more Americans? Do you think we will never have to reap the whirlwind we are sowing?

This morning on the radio they were talking about the alleged US policy of "extreme rendition." Craig Murry a former aid to British defense minister Jack Straw, who's now running for that post, said he's seen photos of prisoners being boiled alive in Uzbekistan in order to provide intelligence. Murry doesn't exactly say it, but he may be alleging that some of these prisoners were sent there by the U.S.A. He points out that extreme rendition, is actually adding fuel to a fundamentalist insurgency in Uzbekistan.

If your sense of self worth is tied to the total success of the U.S. government, it's war machine and an view of the US, reminiscent of the imperial Roman empire, then you will probably accept anything the government does. This is the America love it or leave it mentality that many people consider synonymous with patriotism. Furthermore, they think any other view is traitorous. People who's self worth is based more on principles like individual; civil, human and economic rights have less allegiance to nations that to ideals... please count me as one of these.

Would I lay down my life for this, that or the other thing? I might lay it down for a thing or two, just not the "thing or two" you're telling me to kill, or be killed for. In the greater scheme of things, we're only here for a fleeting moment and maybe it is nobler to erupt like a roman candle for a good cause, than to grow decrepit pursuing nothing but cake and other goodies... but who's to decide what that "good cause" is? That still leaves a lot of room for discussion and hopefully for freedom of choice in these weighty matters.

When people say, "my family " has fought valiantly for America on many occasions, so now "you" should be willing to fight for America... I think to myself, maybe -- maybe not. I see you as willing to fight for your rights and "interests", just like everyone else. I also see "certain people" as being quite willing, to fight for the highest bidder or for spoils... I'm not impressed.

The west has been trying to "civilize" the Arabs since the late 1700's... approximately the same time that the Wahabbi movement arose. All we've managed to do is pillage their lands and make them more radical and hardened. Some say the Bible describes Arabs (the supposed descendents of Ishmael) as "wild

asses” and by implication point out that they can’t be civilized. The Arabs have had more than their share of despots and corrupt leaders, but haven’t many of them been supported or installed by the west.

Maybe the Middle East is a tough neighborhood partly because the land has been occupied and the people have been on a war footing for hundreds of years. Maybe you can “democratize” them and maybe you can’t. Time will tell if they want your form of government. The fact remains that many Arabs continue to live in misery and we continue to perpetuate that misery via sanctions, bombers and troops. It seems to me, the west is determined to make the Arabs submit to the west’s “moral authority” and if that doesn’t work, the west won’t mind leaving them weak, divided, or dead.

Fundamentalist Christianity fits in well with laissez faire capitalism, since in both cases it and all right to do practically anything as long as you’re advancing the “noble cause.” It was called manifest destiny in the 1800’s and though that term is seldom used, now, it is still very much in fashion. The end justifies the means, and if you’re not with them, you’re against them making you fair game for obliteration, or anything else they have in mind. Is it all that different than what you’d face, if you lived in Saudi Arabia and were not, at least outwardly a fundamentalist Muslim.

Of course the Arabs are being “encouraged” to reform and conform to western values. They are being shown that they will have to shave their mustaches if they want to survive. They are seeing that Arabs who oppose the super powers of the west will be sheared like so many sheep. The west, led at this time in history by extremists and neocons, will go to any length to get its way. In the future when the west has assumably prevailed, perhaps it will be moderate and address some of the mistakes they’ve made along the way. During this period of crusade, however, it’s a no holds barred fight!

Hirsh Goodman was talking on C-SPAN TV, he has written a book called, “Let me Create a Paradise, God Said to Himself.” He says that both sides have come to understand in a very fundamental way that they have got to live together. I hope things work out, but I doubt if he and the Palestinians are on the same page. Goodman says that by the time he was 30, he had fought in three wars, and that Israel won them all. He seems like a very shrewd man, but one who will compromise very, very little. The ironic thing is, he’s probably one of the more moderate Israelis.

Member of the British Parliament, George Galloway testified before the U.S. Congress and slammed Senator Norm Coleman on Iraq... It was very interesting, but wasn’t rebroadcast in any detail, especially in the corporate media. Why would they, unless they could discredit him.

Newsweek's report on flushing the Koran down the toilet at Gitmo was met by the Bush administration with calls for the magazine to do more than retract the story and apologize. The administration said the magazine should act to spread the word that the U.S. respects Islam and is staunchly for religious freedom. Predictably, Newsweek, became just another poodle for Bush, it did not stick to its guns and was afraid to find out if there was any truth to the original story...

A while back, the Grand Old Party was on the verge of exercising their "nuclear option" and eliminating the filibuster. The Dems ran an add saying that for 200 years, the filibuster has insured a system of checks and balances. Who's right? I remember learning about the filibuster in school and how it relates to checks and balances. Many people will take partisan sides on the issue, that's how it usually goes, since I don't trust either side, I hope they shoot each other in the foot.

We pride ourselves on not being as cruel as the Romans, Nazis, Japanese or Iraqis and that is true, but coming in last among that crowd is no great prize. How do we compare to the peace loving and civilized nations of the world?

Today, we are bombing the Muslims because they don't practice democracy and because they allegedly mistreat their people, especially the women. Meanwhile America *also* has extremely high rates of domestic abuse and violence of every conceivable type. Last night I saw a TV show documenting the natives of Papua New Guinea and how one was negotiating the sale of his daughters for six pigs and several "net" bags. Why isn't the US forcing them to submit to our form of democracy and to instill women's rights?

I think the war on terror is a misnomer, perhaps it should be the problem of terrorism. It's like the drug war, which I also call a misnomer – that should be the drug problem and we should be concerned with solving it... not punishing people who smoke pot, while alcohol and tobacco are allowed and encouraged via billions in false advertising. Instead we incarcerate people for using drugs and pretend not to know that young men and women in the prison system are routinely and systematically raped by other inmates ... who are the real criminals here?

The corporation "America" wants a maximum return on its investment. If we're a government of the people, by the people and for the people than why are we surprised when others retaliate against us when they have a beef with our international policies? People reap what their government's sow and we are no different. The ROI is for the benefit of the elite, the IOU will likely be paid by the average man, woman and child.

Bush has abandoned the phrase “stay the course”... will he ever abandon the phrase “you’re either for us or against us.” War on terrorism, war on drugs, war on the middle class... why are we always “declaring war”, instead of addressing root problems? In my “humble” opinion, the “war on terrorism” is about as “winnable” as the “war on drugs”, at least if were unwilling to see the forest for the trees.

Should we continue the war on terrorism... well, should Rome have been belligerent towards *everyone* else for 500 years? Would the barbarians have overrun them if they were more peaceful society? Did they have to be so militaristic to survive? I'm not making a direct analogy between America and Rome, but I think there are distinct similarities. If you reap what you sow, they got what they deserved... I hope our situation will be different. According to some of my friends, Rome was punished for oppressing Israel, while we support that country... which they say will be our salvation. I think we should be addressing the root causes of the conflicts in the Middle East... instead of basing our policies on Israel's supposed God-given right to possess the land, no matter what they do or how they got the land.

You say, stop complaining unless you have some ideas about what should the US do in the middle east? Well, I didn’t get us into this mess, but I would suggest adapting a policy that is unbiased vis a vis Palestine, instead of our current one which is utterly and entirely biased. The best chance the US has for brokering a mid east peace, which from time to time our leaders claim to want to do, is to be completely unbiased. Unfortunately such a shift in policy seems impossible... despite the fact that this not a ball game, but deadly serious business and millions of lives may be at stake.

Rome was eventually brought to ruin by the people it despised - hopefully America will become more even handed before a karmic day of reckoning becomes inevitable. The monuments of Rome, Greece and Egypt remind us that these former world power are but shadows of their past glory... perhaps they should have charted a different course... perhaps we should as well - because Rome is burning.

In conclusion, at least for now... I believe that we all have an equal right to; life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Peaceful coexistence should be our priority, and a “shining example” should be the way we try to change the world... meanwhile, the devil’s in the details, so lets get to work!

- end-

About the Author



KW Ibrahim was born in the USA in the 1950s and grew up within sight of the World Trade Center. His father who was born in Egypt, came to the US on a scholarship at the age of 21 where he earned a PhD in engineering.

KWs mother is from the heartland and traces her family back to men who fought in the Revolutionary War, as well as to steadfast pioneer women.

Growing up, KW considered himself "all American" and doesn't recall the words "Arab American" coming together for him until his college years, when negative Arab stereotypes became widespread. Prior to then he says, "I would never have considered myself a 'hyphenated' American. “

KW has been to Egypt several times and remains in touch with relatives in the "old country." He has written several books, including Marriage Vows 2000 and WWJB? which focuses on religion and spirituality.